



## Summary:

There has recently been a plea to better problematize the concept of practice in International Relations (IR) theory. This study attempts to explore (and contribute to) the merits of advocating a practice turn in IR. The thesis begins by exploring the practice theory literature to facilitate the elaboration of a specific practice inspired theoretical framework. It then deploys the framework on the slavery case to argue that a focus on practice(s) can help us better apprehend and explain both the discontinuities and continuities connecting the global abolition of slavery to a set of present-day practices commonly referred to as contemporary forms of slavery. By harnessing the slavery case, the objective is to illustrate the fertility of a practice approach in bridging and adding specificity to some of the more rigid dichotomizations and treatments of global continuities and ruptures. Ultimately, the hope is to eventually transpose the theoretical framework to investigate other issue areas. The overarching and longer term aim is to facilitate comparative studies to investigate and better apprehend issues of global stability and change – with a view to transforming our social world.

# **Slavery as Practice: Continuity and Rupture**

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## **Preface**

Slavery and its ('Contemporary') Forms?

Slavery is a topic that is heavily researched. Its history and numerous facets are elucidated from the vantage point of various perspectives corresponding to the concerns and foci of differing academic disciplines.<sup>1</sup> Arguably, a commonality that runs through much of this varied literature is its treatment – explicit or implicit – of slavery as a thing of the past. This thesis is concerned with how this commonly accepted representation relates to – and reconciles with – the evolution and/or development of a range of activities that have been conceptualized in a growing body of literature (proliferating over the last four decades<sup>2</sup>) as

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Andreas and Ethan Nadlemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)., Roger Anstey, "Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique," *The Economic History Review* 21, no. 2 (1968)., ———, "The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Kent: Wm Dawson & Sons Ltd., 1980)., Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)., Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon, eds., *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975* (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009)., Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988)., Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006)., Ian Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)., Neta Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)., Huw T. David, "Transnational Advocacy in the Eighteenth Century: Transatlantic Activism and the Anti-Slavery Movement," *Global Networks* 7, no. 3 (2007)., David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966)., ———, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984)., Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977)., ———, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade," in *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, ed. Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007)., Betty Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822," *The Journal of Modern History* 38, no. 4 (1966)., Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)., Chaim Kaufmann and Robert Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade," *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999)., Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003)., Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982)., Joel Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011)., and Eric Eustace Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964)., among many others.

<sup>2</sup> For some recent examples see UN, "Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery," United Nations, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SupplementaryConventionAbolitionOfSlavery.aspx>., Working Group on Slavery (UN), "Report of the Working Group on Slavery on Its First Session," (Geneva 1975)., ———, "Report of the Working Group on Slavery on Its Twelfth Session," (Geneva 1987)., Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*., Anna M. Troubnikoff, "Trafficking in Women and Children : Current Issues and Developments." (Nova Science Publishers, 2003)., Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*., Kevin Bales and Becky Cornell, *Slavery Today* (Toronto, Berkeley: Groundwood Books, 2008)., Joel Quirk, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery* (UNESCO, 2009)., and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*.

slavery's modern and/or novel incarnations. The commonly accepted expression that is used to signify this consortium of activities is 'contemporary (or modern) forms of slavery'. These 'modern' forms of slavery include, but are not limited to, practices such as forced and bonded labour, domestic servitude and human trafficking. A quick glimpse at some statistics demonstrates that slavery is definitely not a thing of the past.

In a key piece of literature about modern forms of slavery, Kevin Bales (a prominent antislavery activist and scholar who has contributed to documenting, exposing and raising the global profile of slavery in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries) places the number of people engaged in contemporary forms of slavery worldwide (in 1999) at 27 million. Bales makes it explicit that in comparison to some NGO estimates that place the numbers as high as 200 million, his total is a conservative one that is derived from collating and compiling data from a relatively exhaustive number of sources.<sup>3</sup> Another authoritative source is the International Labour Organization (ILO). A 2002 ILO report places the number of children worldwide engaged in the "worst forms of child labour" at 8.4 million while a 2005 report estimates that there are 12.3 million people worldwide engaged in forced labour.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the U.S State Department's *Trafficking in Persons 2006* report estimates that 800,000 people are trafficked internationally ever year.<sup>5</sup> Other estimates abound but these are considered relatively authoritative. From this very brief statistical survey, it is clear that slavery is not an historical artefact.

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<sup>3</sup> Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*., p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> A *Global Alliance against Forced Labour: Global Report under the Follow-up to the Ilo Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: International Labour Conference 93rd Session 2005. Report I (B)*, (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2005)., p. 10 and *Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labour*, (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2002)., pp. 14 and 23-27.

<sup>5</sup> This estimate has recently been the subject of some controversy due methodological queries and uncertainties but is reiterated in the 2008 version of the report. *Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2006*, (Washington D.C: U.S Department of State, 2006). and *Trafficking in Persons Report: June 2008*, (Washington: Department of State, 2008)., p. 7.

The erroneous and commonly accepted depictions of slavery's relegation to the historical dustbin, and the conception and representation of some present-day phenomena as a grouping of modern and/or novel activities beg many questions. First, are there differing forms of slavery? The use of the word forms inherently implies that these activities are varieties of a species. If they are varieties of a species, does this not automatically imply a relationship – or at a minimum, a connection – between actual and previous manifestations? If so, what informs the logic behind the characterization and conceptualization of the range of current slavery practices as distinctively modern and/or novel?<sup>6</sup> By treating these practices as distinctively modern and/or novel, do we run the risk of rupturing with antecedent incarnations and how they inform the genesis and/or evolution of practices designated as different/new? Are we justified in doing so? And, if so, what are the impacts and implications of these moves?

The initial driving force behind these questions is a desire to come to grips with the nature of contemporary forms of slavery, their relationship to previous incarnations, and why they came to be designated as such, or considered different and/or novel in relation to previous manifestations. From this perspective, understanding the links between the historical and the contemporary is indispensable. This suggestion has already been made and taken up by Joel Quirk in a nascent and illuminating body of literature commendably engaged in this endeavour.<sup>7</sup> By highlighting the links between the historical and the contemporary – the pivotal intersection being the battle against transatlantic chattel slavery – Quirk explores how

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<sup>6</sup> For one of the best known examples that differentiates between the 'old' and the 'new' see Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*.

<sup>7</sup> See Joel Forbes Quirk, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary," *Human Rights Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2006)., Joel Quirk, "Trafficked into Slavery," *Journal of Human Rights* 6, no. 2 (2007)., —, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 12, no. 4 (2008)., Quirk, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery*., J. Quirk and D. Richardson, "Anti-Slavery, European Identity and International Society: A Macro-Historical Perspective," *Journal of Modern European History* 7, no. 1 (2009)., Joel Quirk, "Modern Slavery," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard (Oxon: Routledge, 2011)., and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*.



rupturing with the past contributes detrimentally to the ongoing struggle against slavery, and proffers suggestions to alleviate these challenges. This thesis agrees with and seeks to further Quirk's assertions and objectives regarding the linkage of the historical to the contemporary. However, and in addition, it proposes to examine representations that tend to treat slavery as an historical artefact from a different (theoretical) angle. By doing so, the thesis seeks to harness the slavery case and Quirk's work to inform larger discussions about how continuity and change are conceptualized and apprehended in international relations (IR) theory. As we shall see shortly, the lynchpin of this endeavour will be the concept of practice.

Rather than primarily focusing on the detrimental practical effects of representations that treat slavery as an historical relic, the angle adopted here seeks to build on the objectives of better understanding the nature of contemporary forms of bondage (in line with Quirk's aims) by trying to elucidate why and how some prevalent representations end up artefactizing slavery. In other words, the thesis seeks to improve our understanding of slavery by reiterating and building on Quirk's work to reconnect the contemporary to the historical. In doing so, the hope is to continue the process of denaturalizing the notion that slavery is an historical artefact, underline the fact that contemporary forms of slavery are not as novel as assumed, and further elucidate the fact that the battle against slavery remains unfinished and ongoing.<sup>8</sup> In addition however, from an IR theory perspective, the objective is to explore the value of adopting a particular practice inspired theoretical foil to apprehend the slavery case in order to help better understand the evolutionary nature of practices (and, in turn, stability and change).

The differing focus adopted here looks to make a theoretical contribution that seeks to bridge between contradictory representations of contemporary forms of slavery. The first of

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<sup>8</sup> Although this is the common denominator in all of Quirk's work, for a good expression of these aims see Quirk, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery*.

these representations is based on – and emphasizes – the historical rupture created by the delegitimization and (global) abolition of the practice of slavery (a process initiated by the concerted antislavery struggle begun in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>9</sup> Conceptualizations that treat present-day slavery as different and/or novel build (implicitly or explicitly) on these representations.<sup>10</sup> The second representation (based on Quirk's work) criticizes these positions.<sup>11</sup> It argues that modern slavery activities have actually evolved out of the limitations of legal abolition and are not so much novel as they are developments/evolutions based on overarching and historically durable practices, themes and challenges. Too much emphasis on the rupture created by legal abolition ends up glossing over these linkages and blinds us to the continuities underpinning contemporary slavery. Henceforth, for the purposes of this thesis, I will refer to these differing representations as the discontinuity and continuity camps/positions.

In trying to adjudicate between discontinuity and continuity positions, the thesis will illustrate the way a theoretical focus on practices (or practice theory/practice approach) can contribute to bridging this divide and potentially enhance our understanding of the larger (and simultaneous) processes underlying stability and change. This is important because of the

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<sup>9</sup> Many of which are historical texts focusing on British antislavery struggles. For a few examples see Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (Aldershot: Hampshire: Gregg Revivals, 1992)., Sir Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1964)., Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery* (London: Pan Books, 2006); Edith F. Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973)., Frank J. Klingberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England: A Study in English Humanitarianism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926)., William L. Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1929)., Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (London: Longman, 1975). and Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> The best known of these is reflected in the body of Kevin Bales' work. See Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*., Kevin Bales, "Understanding Global Slavery : A Reader." (University of California Press, 2005)., ———, *New Slavery : A Reference Handbook*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara: Oxford, 2005)., Bales and Cornell, *Slavery Today*. and Kevin Bales, Zoe Trodd, and Alex Kent Williamson, *Modern Slavery : The Secret World of 27 Million People* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> See Quirk, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.", ———, "Trafficked into Slavery.", ———, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.", ———, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery*., Quirk and Richardson, "Anti-Slavery, European Identity and International Society: A Macro-Historical Perspective.", Quirk, "Modern Slavery.", and ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*.

tension that discontinuity positions tend to generate in relation to the sociologically inspired claim that things are in a constant state of flux (always in (re)negotiation).<sup>12</sup> This claim suggests an evolutionary process in which things are more likely to alter rather than come to an abrupt and conclusive end. The thesis suggests that a practice approach could provide nuance to better qualify and flesh out the inherently evolutionary nature of this central claim.

A vital question drives how and why the approach proffered here could inform – and add value to – discussions of processes that underpin stability and change. In assessing why many representations have a tendency to treat global prohibition as an endpoint<sup>13</sup> in the struggle against slavery, the following central query comes to mind. Are these representations justified in invoking a significant historical break? In other words, on the basis of the pivotal transatlantic antislavery struggle that led to legal abolition and the global dissemination thereof, are the ensuing understandings and practices surrounding slavery significantly different enough to warrant the invocation of an historical disjuncture? In response to this query, it is difficult to gainsay that ideational<sup>14</sup> opposition to the slave trade and slavery

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<sup>12</sup> Vincent Pouliot, "'Subjectivism': Toward a Constructivist Methodology," *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2007), p. 366.

<sup>13</sup> The term endpoint is borrowed from Joel Quirk. See Quirk, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary," p. 586 and ———, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery*.

<sup>14</sup> See Anstey, "Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique," Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press Inc., 1975), Anstey, "The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*, Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*, Christopher Leslie Brown, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention*, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823* (London: Cornell University Press, 1975), ———, "Capitalism, Abolition and Hegemony," in *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams*, ed. Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), ———, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*, Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), ———, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labour Vs. Slavery in British Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*, Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain*, Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade," Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865*, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, J.R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-*

became noticeably prevalent and pronounced in the mid to late eighteenth century in the transatlantic geographical area. The struggle against the transatlantic trade set the wheels of the antislavery struggle in motion; a struggle which eventually succeeded, within approximately two hundred years, in legally abolishing (on a global scale) an activity that was justified and deemed normal across civilizations for at least two millennia. For a very long time, slavery was a legitimate and legal institution. It was a branch of international commerce that was engaged in and regulated by multiple states. Today, as a result of the antislavery struggle initiated in the late eighteenth century, slavery is no longer an acceptable practice – at least on the normative and legal fronts. In this sense, at face value, there is a strong argument to support the invocation of an historical break.

However, carried too far, this reasonably justifiable proclivity to invoke a break stands to challenge discontinuity representations' ability to more adequately problematize the links between the historical and the contemporary. Strong conceptualizations treating these types of shifts as historical disjunctures may lead to a premature – and artificial – closure that may in turn inhibit viewing practices in a developmental light. In other words, too much emphasis on these normative shifts may prevent viewing contemporary forms of slavery as a product of a set of evolutionary responses to the fate of previous incarnations (rather than different/novel in relation to them). The question then becomes whether the gap between treatments that invoke justifiable historical breaks – and consequently display an attending tendency that inhibits their capacity to view practices in an evolutionary light – and those that emphasize continuity can be bridged. Once again, this thesis proposes that they can and

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*Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995)., Joel Quirk and David Richardson, "Anti-Slavery, European Identity and International Society: A Macro-Historical Perspective," *Journal of Modern European History* 7, no. 1 (2009)., ———, "Religion, Urbanisation and Anti-Slavery Mobilisation in Britain, 1787-1833," *European Journal of English Studies* 14, no. 3 (2010)., Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, James Walvin, "The Rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition, 1787-1832," in *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Kent: Wm Dawson & Sons Ltd., 1980). and Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*. Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 45.

argues that the key to achieving this task lies in continuing recent work begun on better problematizing practices in IR theory.<sup>15</sup>

The thesis' general argument will be that a practice based approach can help us explain both ruptures and continuities. Briefly, the general theoretical framework that will be adopted can be summed up as follows. On the change side of things, practices shape dispositions which condition reflection, deliberation and action. When these reflections, deliberations and actions run up against other (and others') dispositionally informed practices, the clashes can lead to a dialectic of contestation which can result in the renegotiation of the legitimacy of particular activities. On the stability side of things, in response to this dialectic, practices – especially well entrenched ones – usually exhibit a robust resistance to change and tend to condition evolving thought patterns. Practices therefore tend to mutate rather than come to a definitive end.

The first third of the thesis will elaborate on its theoretical foundations and set the historical context leading up to the beginnings of the antislavery struggle in the late 18<sup>th</sup> c. The second third will focus on rupture (change), while the final third will concentrate on continuity (stability). Chapter One will provide a brief theoretical overview of the social and IR theory literatures on practice. This will help explain and establish the general theoretical framework that the thesis will adopt. The rest of the thesis will then provide evidence to flesh out and substantiate the theoretical propositions and processes outlined in this first chapter. Chapter Two will offer a brief snapshot of the historical and global ubiquity of slavery leading up to the beginnings of the antislavery struggle; select rationalizations that reflected the normalization of the institution during this same period will also be reviewed. This

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<sup>15</sup> For a few examples see Iver Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2002)., Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, "International Practices," *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011). and ———, eds., *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

snapshot and review will serve to illustrate the entrenched nature of slavery and provide a backdrop of the contemporaneous cognitive and environmental landscapes that antislavery activists would face.

Chapter Three will provide an overview of the practices that shaped the dispositions and conditioned the reflections, deliberations and actions of the two primary groups (Quakers and Evangelicals) that ushered the antislavery battle into the British political arena. In other words, this chapter will try to establish how the well-entrenched backdrop of the slavery related cognitive and environmental landscape reviewed in Chapter Two – which developed, perdured and was rarely questioned for over two millennia – began to be overturned. Through a historical review, Chapter Three will also illustrate how Quaker and Evangelical reflections, deliberations and actions translated into the political dynamics that culminated in the legal abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 (the first phase of the British antislavery struggle). Chapter Four will then examine how the institutionalization in the British political establishment – resulting from the authorities' appropriation of the reformed slavery related understandings emanating from the domestic campaign – translated into Britain's zealous projection of the antislavery struggle into the international arena. The focus here will be on the ending of the traffic and slavery in the transatlantic area (the second phase of the British antislavery struggle).

Chapter Five will begin with an examination of the particular way that slavery was abolished on the Indian subcontinent. The examination will highlight how this model of emancipation facilitated the transformation and expansion of historical forms of debt bondage; a metamorphosis that contributed to the evolution of what is currently considered the most expansive and problematic form of contemporary slavery on the planet. This will lead into and facilitate understanding how the internationalization process covered in Chapter Four expanded to other geographical areas (the third phase of the British antislavery struggle)

through the spread of European authority and rule (or European international society). The chapter will illustrate how European and non-European conceptualizations regarding the legitimacy of various forms of servitude diverged, and how this was compounded by European powers simultaneous – and often conflicting – antislavery and colonial practices and commitments. The intricate navigations and machinations involved in balancing these diverging commitments and principles resulted in an incremental process which led to the ‘slow death’ of important variants of slavery (namely chattel slavery). However, it also facilitated the continuation and/or transformation and expansion of other forms of servitude.

Finally, Chapter Six will examine how, in response to pressures to abolish (and eventual abolition), the continuation and/or transformation and expansion of different forms of servitude led to a gradual redefinition of slavery to encompass – and attack – various forms of bondage. In the late nineteenth and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these processes were encapsulated in the dynamics of the antislavery struggle within international machinery and its concomitant development and evolution of slavery related international law. Examining the significant markers of this evolution will continue highlighting the existence of the threads linking how the impacts of both the successes and lacunae of the initial phases of the antislavery struggle have culminated in the designation of, and fight against, bondage practices that we now commonly refer to as contemporary forms of slavery. This will square the circle in terms of demonstrating how a practice approach can therefore explain both the ruptures and continuities involved in the antislavery case. To elaborate the theoretical framework to be adopted in this thesis, we now turn to the task of reviewing the social and IR theory literatures on practice.

## **Chapter 1**

# **Practice Theories and Approaches**



There has recently been an explicit call to better theorize practice in IR.<sup>16</sup> This literature borrows and builds on a similar intellectual endeavour in social theory.<sup>17</sup> In its most basic formulation, the central aim of this turn seeks to undermine the individual as the source of meaning and normativity and replace her/him with practices. In order to sketch a theoretical approach inspired by this ‘practice turn’, the current chapter will proceed in four sections. The first will provide an overview of the practice turn in social theory. The second will explore the suggestions of a duo of IR theorists regarding the promise of building upon this practice turn in the discipline of IR. The third will briefly explore how some recent IR studies have appropriated and deployed – implicitly or explicitly – some of the precepts of the practice turn in social theory. By extracting elements from these overviews, the fourth and final section will map out how the current project seeks to make a practice inspired contribution to IR theory’s conceptualizations of the evolution of practices (or stability and change). We begin with an overview of the practice turn in social theory.

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<sup>16</sup> Its most explicit and vocal advocates are Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot. See Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices." And ———, eds., *International Practices*. In an earlier article, Pouliot has classified the following works under the rubric of this budding practice turn in IR Theory: Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2002)., Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy.", Emanuel Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2005)., Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006)., Michael C. Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security* (London: Routledge, 2007)., Vincent Pouliot, "Pacification without Collective Identification: Russia and the Transatlantic Security Community in the Post-Cold War Era," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 5 (2007)., ———, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities," *International Organization* 62, no. 2 (2008). and ———, "The Materials of Practice: Nuclear Warheads, Rhetorical Commonplaces and Committee Meetings in Russian-Atlantic Relations," *Cooperation and Conflict* 45, no. 3 (2010).

<sup>17</sup> See Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, eds., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2001).

## The Practice Turn in Social Theory

Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot point out that, over the years, a host of IR scholars have contributed to making practices objects of analyses.<sup>18</sup> They continue, however, to specify that the more recent practice turn in IR theory is inspired by and builds on a similar intellectual endeavour in social theory. They credit Iver Neumann's 2002 "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn" article as the watershed that pools, builds on and brings this intellectual movement into the discipline of IR.<sup>19</sup> The text that is often referred to and embodies the notions of this practice turn in social theory (particularly sociology and philosophy) is an edited volume entitled *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*.<sup>20</sup> Before turning to the propositions of some of the practice turn's more vocal IR advocates, it would be useful to start with an overview of what *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* implies.

### Practices and Contemporary Theory

What the editors of *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* mean by a practice turn is neatly paraphrased by Neumann. They (Theodore Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina and Eike von Savigny) "propose practice theory, by which they simply mean general and abstract accounts of incorporated and material patterns of action that are organised around the common implicit understandings of the actors."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> They list the likes of Richard Ashley, James Der Derian, M.J Shapiro, Nicholas Onuf, Friedrich Kratochwil, Didier Bigo, Roxanne Doty, Margaret Keck, Kathryn Sikkink, Christian Reus-Smit, Stefano Guzzini, Ted Hopf and Jeff Huysmans in this category. See Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> See Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy."

<sup>20</sup> Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and von Savigny, eds., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. This edited volume, in turn, builds on and integrates developments afoot in various disciplines for a while (sociology, philosophy, cultural studies, history, anthropology, and science and technology studies). For another example see Victoria E. Bonnel and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (London: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy.", p. 629.

An important strategy deployed in practice theory is to displace concepts like “structures, systems, meaning, lifeworld and actions” as “the primary social thing”.<sup>22</sup> The underlying objective is to steer various disciplines away from problematic dichotomies. In the process, practice approaches reject various strands of thinking “including intellectualism, representationalism, individualisms...structuralism, structure-functionalism, systems theory, semiotics, and many strains of humanism and poststructuralism.”<sup>23</sup> Given the variety of issues flowing from these numerous oppositions, in the introductory chapter to *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Theodore Schatzki affirms that contributors to the edited volume agree that practices are central to mediating “beyond current problematic dualisms and ways of thinking” but “there is no unified practice approach. Most thinkers who theorize practices conceive of them, minimally, as arrays of activity”; consequently as Schatzki affirms, “disagreement reigns on what, if anything, beyond shared understandings is necessary to explain practices.”<sup>24</sup>

Notwithstanding these disagreements, taking the broad definition of practices as “arrays of activity” as a point of departure, the majority of practice theorists agree that the concept of the field of practices is the backbone of the practice approach. “The field of practices is the total nexus of interconnected human practices”<sup>25</sup> or, in relatively simpler terms, it is the hub of the full range of interrelated human activities. Phenomena such as knowledge, meaning, science, power, and historical transformation are parts of, or occur in, this field; they are therefore subsumed within it. Consequently, analyses would fall under the category of practice approach if they do one of two things: produce accounts of practices or

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<sup>22</sup> Theodore R. Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 1-3. For another example of a volume that expresses a similar sentiment from a cultural studies perspective, see Bonnel and Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*.

<sup>25</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory," p. 2.

make the field of practices the focal point for studying the nature and transformation of the phenomena and elements subsumed under it.<sup>26</sup>

A further commonality animating most practice theorists is the belief that practices are activities that are concrete and perceptible (embodied), materially mediated and organized around shared practical understandings.<sup>27</sup> Practical understanding is acquired through a process of learning – through repetition and guidance (inculcation) – of shared embodied know-how (how things are done). This is how practices are maintained (reproduced) and how they consequently underwrite the continuity of social life (providing stability).<sup>28</sup> It is this notion of practical understanding being acquired through inculcation that leads many practice theorists to reject a focus on reflexive and deliberative human capacity as the fundamental sources of social action.<sup>29</sup> This, in turn, leads to a reorientation to exploring how things like habits, customs, traditions, know-how, skills, tacit understandings, and dispositions – rather than beliefs, desires, emotions and purposes – inform human practices. By the same token, practice theory maintains that this very process of the preservation of practices enables the possibility of transformation. It is the stability provided by the solidification of shared understandings (what some might call common sense or social facts) that serves as a launching pad for the possibility of evolution (transformation). However, practice theorists are sometimes criticized for not exploiting the inherent potential of practice inspired theoretical foils to specify how transformation occurs from this point of departure – at the expense of focusing on how practices contribute to underwriting the reproduction of social

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 2 and 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> For discussions about this See Barry Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001)., Theodore R. Schatzki, "Practice Mind-Ed Orders," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001)., Ann Swindler, "What Anchors Cultural Practices," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001). and Laurent Thévenot, "Pragmatic Regimes Governing the Engagement with the World," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001).

life. The observations of two contributors of the *Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* are informative here.

In discussing Schatzki's assertions that practice is commonly now identified as 'the primary generic social thing' (or in some cases the only social thing), Barry Barnes asserts that it may be typical for new theories to put forth exaggerated claims. He advances that theories of practice suffer from this affliction and that a more modest account of theories of practice must, among other things, recognize that: "(c) any attempt to give a satisfactory explanation of social life must make reference to much else besides practice; and (d) practice does not account for its own production and reproduction."<sup>30</sup> Laurent Thévenot attributes some of these issues to sociologists' overreliance on practices as habits, dispositions, routines, customs and traditions to explain perpetuation and reproduction of social order.<sup>31</sup> Barnes laments that it is true that 'idealist writers' sometimes neglect the role of practices altogether but cautions that "to react against excesses of this kind by giving attention exclusively to the role of practice is merely to indulge in another form of excess. It amounts to an ungrounded prejudice in favour of know-how at the expense of know that, in favour of skill and competence at the expense of information and representation."<sup>32</sup> Paradoxically, this leads to the risk of neglecting the reasons why human beings enact practices, without which practices cannot be invoked to explain their own enactment..."as if there is something automatic and compelling about the enactment of...practices which makes it unnecessary to consider what moves or inspires the human beings involved."<sup>33</sup>

The section of this chapter that will briefly summarize a select number of IR works inspired by the practice turn in social theory will reveal that some IR theorists have seized on the promise of practice approaches to problematize/explain change. This thesis seeks to

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<sup>30</sup> Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action.", p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> Thévenot, "Pragmatic Regimes Governing the Engagement with the World.", p. 58. Thévenot classes Bourdieu's work, on the basis of the collective and stable force of the habitus, in this lot., p. 71.

<sup>32</sup> Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action."

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

further that inclination by outlining a practice inspired approach that seeks to explain both change and continuity (by bridging the slavery related discontinuity and continuity positions outlined in the Preface of this work). In other words, while remaining within practice theory orbit, in chapters three and four, the thesis will illustrate how a practice inspired approaches can explain change. Conversely, to effectively illustrate how a practice focus can also capture continuity, chapters five and six will explore the way bondage practices evolved in order to ensure some form of stability in response to significant changes (namely abolition). These subjects will be revisited later when a more specific recap of the thesis' practice inspired theoretical framework is outlined at the end of the current chapter. For now, we will return to our overview of the practice turn in social theory.

In its quest to mediate problematic dichotomies, practice theory also aims to provide space to link to more materialist approaches that draw attention to how human activities are entangled with nonhuman articles (the notion that human activities are materially mediated). Here, the differing inclinations of various practice theorists yield differing lenses to connect to the material world. For example, ethnomethodologists will examine the settings in which activities spread while philosophers may contemplate how meanings of material contexts are dependent on human practices. Sociologists, on the other hand, tend to focus on how the stability of meanings and practices partly mirrors the hardening of material arrangements.<sup>34</sup> By studying the role of non-humans and their agency in informing human practices, some (posthumanists) even challenge the demarcation of the social as strictly delimited by relations between people.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory." For a good IR example see Pouliot, "The Materials of Practice: Nuclear Warheads, Rhetorical Commonplaces and Committee Meetings in Russian-Atlantic Relations."

<sup>35</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 11. See Karin Knorr-Cetina, "Objectual Practice," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001)., Andrew Pickering, "Practice and Posthumanism: Social Theory and a History of Agency," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001). and Joseph Rouse, "Two Concepts of Practice," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001).

The constituents of practice theory/practice approach covered thus far are succinctly expressed in the following passage of the introductory chapter to *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*.

The social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings. This conception contrasts with accounts that privilege individuals, (inter)actions, language, signifying systems, the life world, institutions/roles, structures, or systems in defining the social. These phenomena, say practice theorists, can only be analyzed via the field of practices. Actions, for instance, are embedded in practices, just as individuals are constituted within them.<sup>36</sup>

However, the outline provided thus far only partially explains how a practice approach purports to mediate between problematic dichotomies. The missing link is how embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activities contingent on shared practical understandings relate to social order.

At issue is deciphering the regularities and interconnections in social affairs covering countless individuals and their interactions (determining the nature of macro-social order). Traditionally, this endeavour has taken the form of the individualist-holist dichotomy; a division affected by assigning preponderance to individuals or structures as the loci to decide the question (best known in IR theory as the agency-structure debate). Like other phenomena, practice theory refers the question of order to the field of practices. "This means, first, that order is understood as (a) feature(s) of this field and, second, that components and aspects of the field are deemed responsible for the establishment of order."<sup>37</sup> Disagreements abound in differing descriptions of how this is operationalized/works – mirroring disagreements about the delineation of the constituents parts of the field of practices. Conversely however, practice theorists are bound together in undermining the traditional individualist-holist divide and making use of elements from both camps. This is possible because treating structuring

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<sup>36</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p., 5.

and agential elements as characteristics embedded – and decipherable<sup>38</sup> – in human activities highlights that these elements are both expressed in actions and constitutive of them.<sup>39</sup> Although practices constrain activities and structure the context in which humans act, they are not immune to human intervention. However, practice thinking “appropriates in transfigured form a variety of individualist *explanatia*, while grounding these in a supraindividual phenomenon that differs significantly from those of conventional social thought (e.g., societies and systems).”<sup>40</sup> Notions such as societies and systems are replaced by practices conceived of as embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activities contingent on shared practical understandings.

Ultimately, as they relate to conditioning human action, practices would then be ontologically prior to individual reflection. Since people are born and incorporated into extant ways of doing things facilitated through the process of learning shared embodied know-how, the optimal point of origin to explore and explain reproduction or change is therefore practices. More specifically, it is by reading and making use of extant practices that transformation becomes possible; in essence then, practices are the midwives of change.<sup>41</sup> As Schatzki puts it,

Practice theorists claim, instead, that practices are the source and carrier of meaning, language, and normativity. The generation, maintenance, and transformation of these phenomena are achievements of extant practices that are realized in the public realm of actions and interactions that practices open up. Individuals, instead of effecting and sustaining norms, meaning and language out of their own resources, are integrated (to varying degrees) into the ways of proceeding that characterize extant practices, where these matters are conserved and novelty and transformation take their start.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action.", p. 17.

<sup>39</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 5. Laurent Thévenot cites the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens as two examples attempting to integrate the macrosocial structural and microsocial behavioural levels. See Thévenot, "Pragmatic Regimes Governing the Engagement with the World.", p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



The impact of how knowledge – a component in the field of practices responsible for social order – factors into the equation is obviated in Schatzki's affirmation that "meaning and language, arising from and tied to continuous activity, cannot be telescoped into representations or mental contents, which themselves acquire the property of being about something by virtue of how people use and react to them."<sup>43</sup> In other words, knowledge cannot be compressed/condensed into interpretations or the contents of individual minds, because these elements can only be expressed and manifest in and through continuous activities (practices); continuous activities which depend on shared practical understandings relying on the inculcation of shared know-how, shared skills, tacit understandings, and dispositions<sup>44</sup> (basically, internalized common sense founded on congealed shared understandings).

Given these arguments, the "field of practices", conceived as "the total nexus of interconnected arrays of human activities" becomes the prime location to study how constituent parts and phenomena within the field (such as meaning, institutions, knowledge, power and language) relate to one another and bring about reproduction, transformation and order.<sup>45</sup> The "field of practices" is conceptualized as a heuristic device that subsumes all of these elements under its aegis and thus offers the potential to transcend and operationalize what are often treated as dualisms (like agency and structure). This move is justified by the claim that the components and phenomena in the field are only manifest and expressed through practices and therefore, are embedded in them. In the case of agency and structure for example, when conceptualized this way, one does not need to emphasize, *a priori*, individual nor structural/systemic dynamics in explaining change or continuity. Outcomes are rather inferred by examining embodied and materially mediated arrays of human activities. This contrasts with reading outcomes as exclusive products of, for example, active reflection and

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 3 and 7.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, 5 and 12.

deliberation. In essence, what loosely binds the practice turn and the work of practice theorists is a commitment to the field of practices as the point of departure to investigate order and transformation. Apart from this primary commitment, disagreements abound as to the inclusion, conceptualization, operationalization, functions of, and relations between numerous components that are herded under the aegis of the field. As Scahtzki remarks, “Despite this shared conviction, practice thought encompasses multifarious and often conflicting intuitions, conceptions, and research strategies.”<sup>46</sup>

Elements from this practice turn in social theory have been appropriated by a cluster of IR theorists advocating that IR theory take a similar turn. In the next section, we will briefly review some of the basic tenets that these theorists borrow and build upon; we will also explore the reasons why two of its most vocal advocates feel that a practice turn would add value to IR theory.

### Practices and IR Theory

Taking stock and building upon the steadily proliferating IR theory work pooling on the practice turn in social theory, Adler and Pouliot have very recently invited “students of IR to approach world politics through the lens of its manifold practices.”<sup>47</sup> The claim is that analyses that focus on what practitioners do and accomplish on a daily basis facilitates our understanding of what constitutes global politics. Their goal is to develop a research program that makes practices the point of departure for the study of the subject matter of IR. Rather than offering practice as “the universal grand theory...of everything social”, they maintain that a focus on international practices provides better purchase on explaining the numerous facets of world politics (“power and security, trade and finance, strategy, institutions, organizations, resources, knowledge and discourse, etc.”<sup>48</sup>). Although they acknowledge that

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-14.

<sup>47</sup> Adler and Pouliot, “International Practices.”, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

practices have long been an important element of analyses in IR and there is a debt owed to poststructuralist IR scholars like James Der Derian, M.J Shapiro and Roxanne Doty for drawing initial attention to practices, they seek to expand practice thinking beyond the study of text and meaning.

Akin to the sentiments expressed in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Adler and Pouliot feel that adopting a practice approach compels analysts to engage with “agency and the social and natural environments, with both material and discursive factors, and with the simultaneous processes of stability and change.”<sup>49</sup> Rather than revealing the instability of discourse, their aim is to elucidate how, on the ground, practices play an important role in illustrating how most political currents depend on the fixation of meanings. Although both Adler and Pouliot are known as constructivists, they contend that the advantage of using practices as the point of origin for the study of world politics is that the approach need not be attached to specific “isms”; it provides “a particularly fertile ‘focal point’ making interparadigmatic conversations possible.” In accordance with the practice turn in social theory, the authors assert that a practice approach is valuable because it aids in circumventing “entrenched dichotomies between ideas and matter, stability and change, structure and agency, etc.” and compels to go beyond conventional levels and units of analysis.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, similar to Schatzki’s affirmation that there “is no unified practice approach”<sup>51</sup>, Adler and Pouliot are careful to point out that “there is no such thing as the theory of practice but a variety of theories focused on practices.”<sup>52</sup>

Adler and Pouliot define practices as “competent performances...socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 4.

material world.”<sup>53</sup> Their definition resembles social theory practice approaches in conceptualizing practices as human activities contingent on shared practical understandings that are embedded – and decipherable<sup>54</sup> – in human activities expressed in actions and constitutive of them. In unpacking their definition, the authors expand on five main points.

First, practices are a particular class of action that differ from elements like preferences, beliefs, discourses and institutions. Like the practice turn in social theory that they draw on, the authors claim that preferences, beliefs, discourses and institutions are embedded in, and therefore expressed and manifest, in and through practices. Second, practices are characterized by regularities over time and space (patterns); their repetition reproduces like behaviours with regular meanings. These iterative patterns, in a “socially organized context”, not only denote meaning but structure interaction.<sup>55</sup> Third, the authors are careful to point out that repetition, on its own, cannot account for the structuring dimension of practices. More important than iteration is the presence of others that can evaluate the competence of the performance on the basis of similar standards. This process of social recognition is attributed through communal relations, which implies the existence of “a public, of an audience able to appraise the practice.”<sup>56</sup> As we shall see, this audience issue will become salient when chapters five and six explore the expansion of the antislavery struggle beyond the transatlantic geographical area. Fourth, practices rest on background (practical) knowledge. The authors point out that although knowledge, intention and belief come before practices, practical knowledge is more akin to skill than to representational knowledge (the ‘if A occurs then take action B’ type of knowledge typified by norms or ideas). Finally, “practice weaves together the discursive and material worlds.” Not only do

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action.", p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 6.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

practices make implicit claims about how things are, their enactment in and on the world can alter physical surroundings as well as individual and/or collective ideas about the world.<sup>57</sup>

On the basis of their definition, the authors address the inherent corporate nature of most international practices, i.e., “practices that are performed by collectives in unison”.<sup>58</sup> Judgements about the competence of the performances of practices imply membership in a group characterized by mutual intelligibility and susceptibility in identifying and sustaining shared practices.<sup>59</sup> In light of this, Adler and Pouliot claim that international corporate practices take shape and are manifest through the actions of communities of practices. The relational aspect of the process is facilitated by the dissemination of background knowledge across agents in these communities. In practice theory parlance, these agents are endowed, by learning shared embodied know how through repetition and guidance (inculcation), with similar dispositions which facilitates coordination. In other words, agents in communities of practice enter “patterned relations, within an organized social context, thanks to similar background dispositions.”<sup>60</sup>

In outlining the potential added value of adopting a focus on international practices, the authors assert that their “limited objective” is to suggest lines of inquiry that need further development. This thesis seeks to engage with this need for further development on the basis of a couple of the authors’ suggestions – a matter we will return to shortly. Adler and Pouliot begin their assessment of the added values of honing in on practices at the same intersection that animates the practice turn in social theory; namely, the overcoming of dichotomies. Their

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> See Barnes, “Practice as Collective Action.”, Stephen Turner, *The Social Theory of Practices: Tradition, Tacit Knowledge, and Presuppositions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994). and ———, “Throwing out the Tacit Rule Book: Learning and Practices,” in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>60</sup> Adler and Pouliot, “International Practices.”, p. 8. The framework of communities of practice (similar to Barnes’ membership in a group characterized by mutual intelligibility and susceptibility in identifying, sustaining and evaluating the competence of practices) is developed in IR theory by Adler. See Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations*. and Emanuel Adler, “The Spread of Security Communities: Communities of Practice, Self-Restraint, and Nato’s Post-Cold War Transformation,” *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 2 (2008).

claim is that a practice approach can amalgamate three different approaches that have typified social theory to date. The first is a mentalist version where the mind is the site of the social. In IR theory, this is best exemplified by the social/cognitive psychology inspired works of authors such as Robert Jervis, Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane. The focus here is on individual ideas and beliefs in explaining foreign policy. The second, inspired by poststructuralism, is a turn to language in understanding meanings as located in discourse. This is exemplified in critical readings of texts that decipher discourse exemplified by the works of scholars like Der Derian and Shapiro. The third emphasizes the intersubjective emergence of meanings through social interaction and is typical of constructivist authors like Adler and Alexander Wendt. Adler and Pouliot see practice theory as the next step that builds on these existing approaches to “conceive of the social as bundles of ideas and matter that are linguistically, materially, and intersubjectively mediated in the form of practices.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, culture is not limited to existing in people’s minds, discourses and interactions. It is contained in the performance of practices. They present four points to substantiate these propositions.

First, practices have material and meaning connotations. They connect with the physical environment. A good example is the maintenance of the intersubjective structure of nuclear deterrence because of the existence of thousands of warheads.<sup>62</sup> However, even though practices connect to the material and are concrete and perceptible in and through the physical, the physical, on its own, cannot denote meanings. People attribute meaning to their activities through social interaction (meanings are contested and negotiated). Second, practices are both agential and structural. Practices, performed by human individuals recursively, “lock in structural meaning in time and space.”<sup>63</sup> This mirrors the practice turn in

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<sup>61</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices."

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 15 and Pouliot, "The Materials of Practice: Nuclear Warheads, Rhetorical Commonplaces and Committee Meetings in Russian-Atlantic Relations."

<sup>63</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 16.

social theory, which asserts that practices underwrite the continuity of social life, and the stability provided by the solidification of shared understandings serves as a launching pad for the possibility of evolution (transformation). It is at this very intersection that the human ability to do things differently is born. Reading and making use of extant practices makes transformation possible. Thus, Adler and Pouliot conclude that practices are suspended between agents and structures. Although practices constrain activities and organize the social/political context in which humans act, they are not immune to human intervention. As a result, in contrast to the methodological bracketing that “begin with agents (or structures), and then look at the other side of the co-constitution equation”, the authors argue that making practices the main site of the social offers a superior formulation of the mutual constitution of agents and structures.<sup>64</sup>

Third, the authors claim that knowledge (intentions, beliefs, reasons, goals, etc.) always lies behind practice but does not precede it; rather, knowledge is enclosed in the execution of practice. Adler and Pouliot carefully caution that not only does practice not trump reflexivity, judgement and expectations; practice actually depends on peoples’ reflexive, normative and instrumental judgements to stay successfully institutionalized.<sup>65</sup> Hence, the authors’ affirm that reflection and judgement are at the root of practice transformation (a point that will be illustrated throughout this thesis, specifically in chapters two, three and four). However, true to the practice turn in social theory, the authors want to draw “special attention to all those meanings that are weaved into practice, and that, as such, remain tacit and inarticulate.”<sup>66</sup> Following John Searle, they call this type of knowledge background knowledge. Background knowledge is made up of collectively negotiated and accepted expectations and biases that can only be ascertained as embedded in practices. Through repetitive practices, collective meanings contained in background knowledge are so

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

deeply ingrained that they are forgotten as such – unless they are “reflexively recovered.”<sup>67</sup>

The logical corollary is that people most often act on the basis of entrenched knowledge as opposed to reflection and deliberation. This does not mean that practices are devoid of meaning. It just means that deliberative and reflective representations (usually verbal and intentional) are not always the best ways to understand the meanings embedded in practices motivating actions. And that this very process of the development of background knowledge based on entrenched collective meanings gives rise to the possibility of reflection, deliberation and intentional action.<sup>68</sup> Once again, this mirrors social theory’s practice turn in asserting that it is by reading and making use of extant practices that transformation becomes possible. Therefore, practices are the midwives of change.<sup>69</sup>

Fourth, and central to this thesis, practices contribute to both continuity and change. Through the solidification of shared understandings (congealed intersubjective knowledge), the maintenance of practices underwrites the continuity of social life (ensures stability).<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, an important recurring theme in both the practice turns in social and IR theory is the notion that “it is also from practices that social change originates.”<sup>71</sup>

Stability, in other words, is an illusion created by the recursive nature of practice. For another, new ways of thinking or doing necessarily emerge from the contingent ‘play of practice’ (Doty, 1997), in which meanings are never inherently fixed or stable.<sup>72</sup>

In wrapping up their invitation for students in IR to study their subject matter through the “manifold lens of practices”, Adler and Pouliot emphasize that the flexibility and accommodating qualities of a practice approach can cater to a variety of perspectives in the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 18 and Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.", p. 271.

<sup>68</sup> Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.", p. 258 and Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 12.

<sup>70</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18 and Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18 and Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18.



discipline. Rather than yet another attempt at synthesis, their goal in advocating a practice turn is

...for a variety of perspectives to meet around a *conceptual focal point* while keeping their distinctiveness. For example, realists can analyze the lifecycle of the balancing practice from a material power perspective, while liberals can emphasize choices of institutions and individual choices. English school scholars can emphasize the historical processes via which emerging practices aggregate into international societies, while constructivist and poststructuralist scholars may emphasize transformation in collective meanings and discourse as a result of practice.<sup>73</sup>

The objective is to foster dialogue and cross-fertilization rather than competition, inclusion or complementarity. The claim is that research questions stemming from a practice approach could stand to advance interparadigmatic dialogue that could bridge the dichotomies which afflict social theory. The authors' ultimate hope is that a practice turn in IR "might breed innovative ways of engaging with the world of research and policy that are contextually progressive, both analytically and normatively."<sup>74</sup> In order to illustrate this potential, Adler and Pouliot outline eight prospective practice approach avenues of research.

Two of these are relevant for this thesis. One relates to expanding the practice approach to non-diplomacy/security IR study areas. The other is classified under the heading *Evolution of Practices*. It is worth quoting the authors at length here.

When studying international practices from a historical perspective, one has to look back to the generative relationships that made them possible, as well as the socio-political processes that allowed their diffusion. In so doing, a practice lens denaturalizes the taken-for-granted condition of contemporary world politics. International practices are not ahistorical patterns of action, but evolving sets of activities that connect with past social and political struggles over the meaning and ruling of the world. Certain practices remain isolated; others triumph over distance, cultural differences, and the passing of time. In addition, historicizing practice eschews the pitfalls of functionalism and allows for path dependence and other historical effects on current international practice.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

A reiteration of this thesis' objectives would be useful here in order to relay how its goals approximate this suggested line of inquiry. The thesis seeks to further Quirk's work that attempts to reconnect the historical to the contemporary in relation to the practices of slavery. One objective is to continue the process of "**denaturalizing taken for granted**" representations that treat slavery as an historical artefact and/or depict contemporary forms of bondage as different and/or novel. These moves are meant to stress **the evolutionary nature of practices** associated with slavery and further obviate the fact that the battle against slavery remains unfinished and ongoing.<sup>76</sup>

In the process however, the thesis seeks to harness the slavery case (and Quirk's work) to make a theoretical contribution. It seeks to do so by attempting to bridge between two main currents in the slavery literature. The first and more prevalent one emphasizes **change** by invoking an historical break. In this current, slavery is either represented as an historical artefact or current forms of bondage are treated as novel and/or different to antecedent incarnations. The second emphasizes **stability** and is based on more recent work that stresses a more continuous process in understanding and appreciating contemporary forms of slavery as an evolution of and/or response to the fate of past practices (typified by Quirk's research). Consequently, by illustrating how a practice inspired approach can serve as a via media between the differing treatments of slavery by the continuity and discontinuity camps, the thesis seeks to add substance to some of Adler and Pouliot's claims about the advantages of adopting a practice approach in seeking to apprehend *The Evolution of Practices* whilst accounting for the simultaneous processes that undergird stability and change.

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<sup>76</sup> Although this is the common denominator in all of Quirk's work, for a good expression of these aims see Quirk, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery*.

To use Adler and Pouliot's words, this thesis seeks to use the slavery case to accomplish its ends by "studying international practices from a historical perspective" and looking back "to the generative relationships that made them possible, as well as the socio-political processes that allowed their diffusion". Doing so adds credence to the statement that "International practices are not ahistorical patterns of action, but evolving sets of activities that connect with past social and political struggles over the meaning and ruling of the world" and therefore, "historicizing practice...allows for path dependence and other historical effects on current international practice."<sup>77</sup> Ultimately, the hope is to illustrate how focusing on practice to demonstrate how bondage activities were transformed/evolved helps us better comprehend and ascertain the historical evolution of slavery and the contemporary state of bondage in the world.<sup>78</sup>

This concludes the brief overview of what the practice turn in social theory implies and the arguments for its application and promise in IR theory. In order to facilitate the task of outlining and recapping this thesis' practice inspired theoretical framework in the final section of this chapter, we now turn to briefly outlining a select sample of IR works that have seized and built on the contours of the practice turns in social (and IR) theory.

### The IR Practice Turn in Action

Arguably, the divergences and variety of conceptualizations of how practice functions to explain reproduction and change in other disciplines is beginning to be reflected in a steadily growing literature that Adler and Pouliot classify under the rubric of the practice turn in IR theory.<sup>79</sup> Rather than endeavour to be exhaustive, the purpose of this section is to

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<sup>77</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 29.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>79</sup> See Ibid., ———, eds., *International Practices.*, Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999.*, Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy.", Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations.*, Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security

provide a brief overview of a few select examples in order to exhibit research that is based on some of the theoretical precepts covered thus far. This exercise will facilitate the outlining of this thesis' theoretical framework in the ensuing and final section of the current chapter.

The brief review will consist of four publications that can be considered early prototypical examples building on elements from the practice turn in social theory. It will consist of works from Neumann, Michael Williams, Adler and Pouliot. We begin with Neumann's 2002 "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn" article, which Adler and Pouliot credit as the watershed that pools, builds on and imports the intellectual endeavour begun in social theory to the discipline of IR.

#### "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn..."

In Neumann's 2002 "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn", the author expresses concerns about the IR linguistic turn's "tendency to privilege discourse over practice." He notes that the emphasis has meant that the study of the preconditions of social action have been privileged at the expense of the practice of social action ("how politics is actually effected").<sup>80</sup> He proposes that a corrective inspired by the practice turn in social theory is required to return to foregrounding the aspect of practice that seminal discourse analysts such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Michel Foucault emphasized. In order to "re-combine the study of meaning with the study of practice", Neumann suggests that the insights provided by the linguistic turn need to be combined with practice theory's reversal of making material practices the point of departure for analysis. He suggests that making culture a linchpin by

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Dilemma.", Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security.*, Pouliot, "Pacification without Collective Identification: Russia and the Transatlantic Security Community in the Post-Cold War Era.", ———, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities." and ———, "The Materials of Practice: Nuclear Warheads, Rhetorical Commonplaces and Committee Meetings in Russian-Atlantic Relations."

<sup>80</sup> Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy.", p. 629.

conceptualizing it as “a dynamic interplay between discourse and practice”<sup>81</sup> is one way to achieve this end.

Neumann proceeds to conceptualizing discourse as preconditions for action and practice as socialized patterns of action; the combination of the two amounts to culture.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, if discourses are manifest in action (practices), practices stand to confirm or disconfirm the discourses nested within them; this is what gives rise to the possibility of the emergence of new practices. According to Neumann, the necessary reorientation to tracking (empirical) changes that this framing entails makes dynamism – not equilibrium – a normal state. Additionally, the author points out that the stability of practices is not owed strictly to engrained and standardized ways of doing things (habit). Inspired by Ann Swindler (another contributor to *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*), the author affirms that the human need to engage others naturally leads people to the familiarity and comfort of practices delineated by their shared common structures.<sup>83</sup> Ultimately, in the midst of this “dynamic interplay between discourse and practice”, Neumann calls the type of influence that negotiates new practices (or confirms existing ones) conceptual power.<sup>84</sup> He uses this notion of conceptual power to illustrate how, in an attempt to establish regional interstate cooperation in the High North, post cold war Norwegian diplomacy heralded a shift from centralised to multi-based diplomatic practices.

Neumann explains how the unforeseen change in global political discourse (in which diplomatic discourse was embedded) in the aftermath of the Cold War provided a small group within the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) the opportunity “to improvise the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 630.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 631.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 631 and Swindler, “What Anchors Cultural Practices.” For a recent and interesting IR take on how this human propensity may ironically lead to a continuance rather than an escape from the realist security dilemma, see Mitzen, “Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma.”

<sup>84</sup> Neumann, “Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy.”, p. 636.

building of a new region”<sup>85</sup> (the Barents Region) through the use of extant practices. The first move of the group was to commission studies and reports that affirmed, notwithstanding the Cold War period, that Russia-Norway relations had always been friendly. With this narrative in place, the path to initiate new practices was cleared. The innovation of introducing a two tiered (one national and one regional) institutional structure to manage the region moved the “official conduct of relations between governments” from its traditional site in national capitols to a more diffused structure. By “institutionalizing a role for (certain) locally elected officials where no such roles had before existed”, the innovation stood, in turn, to change diplomatic discourse.<sup>86</sup> Neumann concludes that,

By producing and fielding new knowledge, the MFA wielded conceptual power that made possible the establishment of a new practice. This new practice was then established in the face of notable opposition from the ‘discourse police’ inside the Norwegian MFA. As a result, Norwegian diplomatic discourse changed and local political discourse in Northern Norway changed as well.<sup>87</sup>

### *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power...*

In *Culture and Security*, Williams observes that constructivist responses to “narrow rationalist and materialist understandings of state action” have focused on norms, values, and identities at the expense of the concepts of power and strategy.<sup>88</sup> Williams uses Bourdieu’s concepts of field of practice, cultural capital and symbolic power<sup>89</sup> to argue that the post Cold War era saw a devaluation of military and material power at the expense of an appreciation of cultural and symbolic forms of power within what he calls ‘the cultural field of security’.<sup>90</sup> Rather than normative logics ruling or governing practices, the central claim is that specific articulations (practices) about the relationship between culture and security are forms of

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 640.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 641.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 648.

<sup>88</sup> Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security*., p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., chapter 2, Peter Jackson, "Pierre Bourdieu, the 'Cultural Turn' and the Practice of International History," *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 2 (2008). and ———, "Pierre Bourdieu," in *Critical Theorists and International Relations*, ed. Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughn-Williams (Oxon: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>90</sup> Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security*., p. 2.

power that produced/produce security practices. Williams argues that claims inherent in the democratic peace which led/lead to policies that serve to foster, build and maintain democratic security communities like NATO are exemplars of this process. Through these practices/articulations, the definition of security in terms of culture transformed the field of security into an arena in which the heightened importance of cultural and symbolic power was dominantly possessed by “Western states, societies and organizations.”<sup>91</sup>

Williams begins his arguments by elucidating how the ostensible separation between material strategic relations and culture is actually a historical construction rooted in western political thought.<sup>92</sup> Put another way, this tenuous separation is actually the result of long-standing/evolving historical cultural practices and changes that relate to the shaping of the politics of security. The author traces this evolution to what he calls the emergence of the ‘liberal sensitivity’, “an historical attempt to construct a new ensemble of knowledgeable practices in response to turmoil and violence – the security concerns – of the early modern era.”<sup>93</sup> Given that the turmoil of the period lay in “non-empirical claims of individual conviction and conscience”, the hope was to root out this turmoil by consciously attempting to limit discourse to the “positive, phenomenal” world.<sup>94</sup> In this context, the current tenuous divide between material strategic relations and culture rests on an evolved reification of these historical cultural practices. Therefore rationalism and materialism are themselves cultural practices rooted in this historical legacy.

Seen through this lens, the rationalism vs. constructivism divide distorts the question of how practices shape the politics of security. For Williams, Kantian liberalism “performs subtle yet powerful disciplinary functions [that] generates specific practices of identity and substantial, if often overlooked, forms of power that can become the basis of strategies

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., chapter 1.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 10 and chapter 1.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 12 and chapter 1.

exercised by dominant actors in the security field of the democratic peace.” Aspirations to be included in this group conferred/confer those with the “recognized status and knowledge (the cultural and symbolic power)” with the power to determine the changes required for inclusion.<sup>95</sup> These articulatory practices are also linked to and underpin NATO’s identity shift in the wake of the disappearance of the Soviet threat. The reconstitution and adaptation of NATO in this new security environment also served/serves to its use as a vehicle to exercise power on that very environment (an issue broached by Adler in the next piece under review). Williams concludes that

Opening up this legacy helps clear away some of the more pernicious and powerful barriers to a fuller theorization of practice in security studies.

The recognition poses significant challenges for thinking about the relationship between analytic and political practices, and the relationship between scholarship and power in the construction of security relations.<sup>96</sup>

#### “The Spread of Security Communities: Communities of Practice...”

In an article about the spread of security communities, Adler is essentially examining how practices spread and institutionalize knowledge. Specifically, on the basis of a practice approach, he attempts to build a theory about communities of practice as facilitators of this process. He asserts that existing theories of institutional expansion may be deficient in the treatment of the matter because they do not make practices a central focus in developing and explaining their propositions.<sup>97</sup> In order to alleviate these deficiencies, he argues that communities of practice are “carriers of social structure across functional and geographical boundaries”; this process is not exclusive to states and social networks. He introduces these notions within a theory of the cognitive evolution of communities of practice.<sup>98</sup> Given that

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 9 and 7.

<sup>97</sup> Adler, "The Spread of Security Communities: Communities of Practice, Self-Restraint, and Nato's Post-Cold War Transformation.", p. 196.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.



practices set the frame that makes “possible political actors’ socialization and persuasion and ultimately their rational calculation”, Adler contends that adopting a new practice can generate the ability to change social structure. Beyond the “geographical and numerical enlargement” of actors partaking in activities inherent in the diffusion of practices, new agents’ participation in these activities within communities of practice entails learning; learning which in turn enables the negotiation of meanings and identities and a sense of collective joint enterprise. In this sense, by contributing to innovating or stabilizing practices, communities “structure consciousness and intention” and enable agency which facilitates the transformation and/or broadening of social structure.<sup>99</sup>

Adler deals with one type of community of practice, namely a security community. The author contends that security communities spread through the co-evolution of background knowledge and subjectivities of self-restraint. He illustrates his thesis by examining how, through a ‘cooperative security’ community of practice, a security community expanded in the 1990s from a core of Western states to Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC).<sup>100</sup> The contention is that this community of practice expanded out of the Helsinki process to provide the EU and NATO with the practices (templates) necessary to spread the social structure of the western security community. In the article, Adler focuses on NATO; specifically on “NATO’s partial transformation into a cooperative-security institution in the 1990s and its subsequent efforts to expand the security community further.”<sup>101</sup> Although many studies have advanced various survival and adaptation arguments justifying NATO enlargement, Adler asserts that they do not specifically explain why security-community social structures spread instead of other types of social structures. He contends that the character of these survival and adaptation strategies rested on the practices that NATO adopted after the Cold War. And although potential member states initially acted

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

instrumentally to defend against future Russian threats, the choice of practices that led to security-community social structures held candidate states to adhere to cooperative-security activities. Through ensuing interactions, the interests and identities of candidate states evolved continuously in parallel with NATO's transformation and enlargement. This was "made possible by the 'cooperative-security' way in which the 'templates' were offered and discussed by NATO (Johnston, 2005, 1023)." <sup>102</sup>

Practices like partnership provide (and entice) potential members the opportunity to learn and adopt a community of practice's standards and activities. This facilitates the forging of like-mindedness and shared identity that stands to include potential members into a community and consequently, reap some of that community's benefits (security, economic and cultural). <sup>103</sup> Adler advances that the first step of NATO's post Cold War transformation originated in the organization's adoption of CSCE inspired intellectual premises about European security. Experts and bureaucrats joined the community of practice and provided it with intellectual legitimacy and mediated disagreements about enlargement between the political classes of member countries. This eventually led to the adoption of a security policy based on dialogue, cooperation and the maintenance of defence capability. <sup>104</sup> Efforts to institutionalize partnerships between East and West consequently led to attempts to shape partners to adopt NATO practices (the creation of the NACC, Partnership for Peace and the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council are some examples). The admission of three new members (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) in 1999 and the official elaboration of a new framework for other aspiring states to join (the Membership Action Plan) entrenched NATO's evolving transformation (and adoption of the new intellectual premises of European security). <sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

The transformation and adoption of new practices then allowed the diffusion, through its attending community of practice, of “expectations and dispositions of self-restraint to partners.” Adler is careful to point out and factor into the analysis the various other elements that aligned to make the spread of the social structure of the security community through the community of practice possible – including material power, historical developments, evolution of institutions and practices, norms and epistemic understandings.<sup>106</sup> The author states that his theory of cognitive evolution of communities of practice offers better purchase on the functioning of agency and structure. He concludes by stating that his theory might facilitate the opening up of a research agenda that “may break new ground by creating openings for the emergence of new and better human practices, global governance institutions, and transformed human beings.”<sup>107</sup>

“The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice...”

The seeds of Pouliot’s advocacy for a practice turn in IR are laid in an article about constructivist methodology and further developed in a later article about the logic of practicality.<sup>108</sup> In the earlier article, Pouliot affirms that “Discursive intersubjective practices falter unless constantly instantiated and reinstantiated through agents’ practices.”, and, “the analysis of practices as meaningful actions is another way to put meanings in context.”<sup>109</sup> In the later article, dissatisfied with most social theories’ focus on what “agents think about”, Pouliot wants to reorient social theories to concentrate on what agents “think from.” He argues that the three major logics of action in IR theory, the logics of consequences (rational choice), appropriateness (normative constructivism) and argument (deliberative constructivism) suffer from a strong representational bias. In rational choice, actors’ choices

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>108</sup> Pouliot, “‘Subjectivism’: Toward a Constructivist Methodology.” and ———, “The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.”

<sup>109</sup> Pouliot, “‘Subjectivism’: Toward a Constructivist Methodology.”, pp. 371-372. See also ———, “The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.”, p. 264.

are inferred from calculation based on desires and intentionality. Conversely, intersubjective representations of reality, morality or individuality play similar functions in normative constructivism while collective deliberation and truth-seeking (as a form of communicative action) are analogous elements for deliberative constructivism. “Conscious representations are emphasized to the detriment of background knowledge – the inarticulate know-how from which reflexive and intentional deliberation becomes possible.” Pouliot asserts that “One cannot impute to practitioners a theoretical perspective that is made possible by looking at social action backward and from above.”<sup>110</sup>

The author’s injunction is that although a wide range of action can be explained this way, some actions are not easily amenable to analysis within representational frameworks. He invokes the gulf between academic depictions (representations) of diplomacy as calculative and/or deliberative and practitioners’ perceptions of it as “a matter of human skills and judgements”<sup>111</sup> as an example of this divide. He then proceeds to affirm that these diplomatic skills are background dispositions acquired in and through practice. Diplomats are incorporated into a field of practices with extant ways of doing things, which inculcate them, through these practices, with certain understandings that condition their activities (practices). These observations lead Pouliot to the premise that most of what people do in world politics derives from practical knowledge “that makes what is to be done appear “self-evident” or commonsensical.”<sup>112</sup>

By using the case of international peace (security communities), Pouliot endeavours to demonstrate the potential for analyses based on practical logic. He contends that bringing these background knowledges to the fore illustrates “the ontological priority of the logic of practicality in relation to the mutually constitutive dynamics between agency and

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<sup>110</sup> Pouliot, “The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.”, pp. 258, 262, 270, 271 and 277.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

structure.”<sup>113</sup> This leads the author to subsequently assert that the logics of practicality, consequences, appropriateness and argument are complementary. The logic of practicality informs “any and all conscious and reflexive action.”<sup>114</sup> Using a Bourdieusian framework, the example of security communities is used to illustrate how “peace exists in and through practice when security officials’ practical sense makes diplomacy the self-evident way to solving interstate disputes.”<sup>115</sup>

Pouliot begins by criticizing Karl Deutsch’s and Adler and Barnett’s conceptualizations of security communities as being driven by representational knowledge. Deutsch ascribes the elites’ representations of one another in these communities as a test of integration while Adler and Barnett see peoples’ blurring of the self-other distinction as necessary for “dependable expectations for peaceful change.”<sup>116</sup> Pouliot contends that there is more to peace than representations. The author uses trust as an example to illustrate.

Trust (defined as “believing despite uncertainty”) is the perfect example of an inarticulate feeling derived from practical sense. Based on personal and collective history (habitus) and faced with a particular social context (field), security practitioners “feel” (practical sense) that they could believe despite uncertainty – that is, they trust their security counterparts. As a background feeling, trust does not derive from instrumental calculations, norm compliance, or reasoned consensus: it is informed by the logic of practicality. The reasons why an agent trusts are not readily verbalizable; they derive from tacit experience and an embodied history of social relations. Trust is practical sense.<sup>117</sup>

The argument is that properly conceptualizing and integrating elements like trust, which are derived from practical knowledge, becomes highly important in explaining peace, which is contingent on trust. The social fact of peace is dependent on the practice of diplomacy. More specifically, it is when diplomacy achieves the status of becoming the only conceivable way to solve disputes (at the expense of violence as an option) that peace settles in. In this sense,

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 277

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

“peace exists in and through practice when security officials’ practical sense makes diplomacy the self-evident way to solving international disputes.”<sup>118</sup> Diplomacy becomes the normal practice that forms the background from which officials still think instrumentally and/or normatively about possible actions to solve disputes short of violence. Pouliot invokes the painful resolution of some of the transatlantic security community’s most pronounced disagreements (example Iraq) diplomatically as evidence of this now routinized normalization.

In concluding, Pouliot asks the crucial question of how we get to this stage. He concludes that peace within security communities are the result of past agents’ efforts to define reality; he uses the Bourdieusian notion of the practices of capitally endowed agents to explain how this occurs.

The order of things is established through the iterated practices performed by capital-endowed agents, because their doing something in a certain way makes the implicit but powerful claim that “this is how things are.” Power is exerted at the level of inarticulate knowledge: meanings are thoughtlessly imposed in and through practice.<sup>119</sup>

With the theoretical overviews of the practice turns in social and IR theory and the brief review of sample works showcasing the practice turn in action in IR complete, the final section of this chapter will now turn to outlining – on the basis of elements drawn from these reviews – the theoretical framework that this thesis will use to harness the slavery case to contribute to informing larger discussions about stability and change within IR theory.

### Building on Practice Theory

Although the divergences and variety of conceptualizations of how practice functions to explain reproduction and change is reflected in the theoretical outlines and works reviewed in the previous sections, for the purposes of this thesis, three significant and interconnected

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

commonalities bind the publications that were reviewed. Seemingly heeding some of the criticisms that many practice theorists focus on explaining the perpetuation and reproduction of social order (at the expense of elucidating change), the IR works briefly summarized in the previous section all attempt to elucidate change. This is important because of the recurring theme in the practice turn literature (in social and IR theory) that “it is also from practices that social change originates.”<sup>120</sup> This contention serves as the platform from which this thesis’ arguments take off. In Neumann’s case it is about a change to diplomatic practice. In Williams’ book, the focus is on a shift that redefines security within the cultural field of security. With a specific focus on NATO as one driver, Adler explains the spread of a security community (through a community of practice) from the West to Eastern Europe. While Pouliot explains how peace, dependent on diplomacy becoming the only conceivable course for conduct between nations, cements the establishment of security communities.

Flowing naturally from this first commitment to explicate change, the second binding commonality of the four works reviewed is that they all take extant practices as their point of departure for investigation – a fundamental criteria that allows categorizing these works under the large umbrella of practice approaches. Neumann begins with existing diplomatic protocol which makes established centralized control in foreign relations between states the taken for granted way to conduct relations. Williams’ moves illustrate the post Cold War shift from established security practices reliant on military and material power to the appreciation of practices based on cultural and symbolic forms of power. Adler’s point of origin to explain the expansion of the security community to Eastern Europe originates in the extant cooperative security practices of the Helsinki process and NATO. And Pouliot moves from the recognition of violence as an acceptable practice for the pursuit of state objectives to the elimination of this option within security communities.

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<sup>120</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18 and Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 3.

Finally, all reviewed publications affirm (implicitly or explicitly) that reflection and deliberation, conditioned by extant practices, facilitates contestation(s) that gives rise to the possibility of change. Neumann is the most explicit here; this is clearly illustrated by his use of the notion of conceptual power relying on the expressed thoughts and actions of the small group in the Norwegian MFA that wielded this tool. In *Culture and Security*, Williams characterizes his arguments that rationalism and materialism are themselves cultural practices rooted in a particular historical legacy (the ‘liberal sensitivity’) as a conscious attempt to limit discourse to the “positive, phenomenal” world to root out the turmoil of the early modern period. He uses the writings of thinkers like Hobbes and Locke to substantiate these claims. Adler similarly uses the thoughts and claims expressed by personnel involved in the adoption and dissemination of NATO’s cooperative security objectives (based on practices of the CSCE) during NATO’s post Cold War struggle to redefine its purpose. In “The Logic of Practicality”, Pouliot is arguably the one that least unpacks the role of reflection and deliberation. Although he affirms that reflection and deliberation becomes possible because of the logic of practicality – a claim which is implicitly or explicitly worked in to the frameworks of the other three authors – he falls back on the notion of thoughtlessness arising from background knowledge as the progenitor of change.<sup>121</sup> Neumann, Williams and Adler are relatively more explicit in their operationalization of change through the conditioning properties of (extant) practices and the impacts these have on the very possibility of reflecting and deliberating about human activities and behaviours. This is significant because, as this thesis argues, the process of change takes flight with dialectics of contestation that are spurred on by clashing (dispositionally informed) practices.

The theoretical framework with which this thesis proposes to harness the slavery case to contribute to informing larger discussions about stability and change within IR theory pools

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<sup>121</sup> Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.", p. 282.



and builds on these commonalities – which in turn borrow and build upon elements from the theoretical and sample publications reviews in the previous sections of this chapter. The overarching objective aims to inform and animate discussions/debates about better accounting for continuity and discontinuity – or stability within change – in perpetually evolving and dynamic environments.

### Theoretical Framework

The key to this thesis' attempt at building on some of the core propositions of the practice turn hinges on the turn's arguments that a practice approach offers a more conducive point of origin and superior formulation to understanding social action and how it relates to stability and change. Building on the practice turn, the thesis' theoretical framework unfolds in three general phases.

#### 1. Practices as a Point of Origin for Analysis

We are embedded in existing practices. These practices consist of patterned human activities that are organized around and express our shared understandings. These collective understandings are transmitted to us in and through learning – through repetition and guidance (inculcation) of shared embodied know-how (how things are done). The repetitive nature of these practices produces regularities that constitute our background knowledge. In turn, our background knowledge forms the repository of deeply ingrained collective meanings that inform our actions (practices). Practice theorists emphasize that the collective meanings that rest in our background knowledge are so entrenched that they come to be forgotten as such. It is this notion of practical understanding being acquired through inculcation that leads many practice theorists to oppose a focus on reflexive and deliberative human capacity as (exclusive and/or primary) motivators of a lot of human activity. The turn to background knowledge makes habits, customs, traditions, know-how, skills, tacit understandings and dispositions, elements of study informing practices. The iterative nature

of the process described above maintains practices and consequently underwrites the continuity of social life. Therefore, investigating the existing practices that we are embedded in allows us to establish/decipher the social context and parameters (structure) within which we operate. In this sense, practices are ontologically prior to individual reflection.

The thesis begins with a central focus on the practice of slavery as a point of departure for analysis. For at least two millennia, we can construe the perduring practices of slavery as functioning on the basis of the well entrenched collective meanings at rest in peoples' background knowledge(s). In outlining the ubiquity of slavery across time and space and reviewing select rationalizations justifying and perpetuating its practice, Chapter Two will establish that these entrenched collective meanings resting in peoples' background knowledge(s) were so deeply-rooted that they came to be forgotten as such – and subconsciously regulated evolving thought patterns perpetuating bondage. In other words, as it related to slavery, through the iterative nature of the processes of the inculcation of how things were done, the legitimacy of the practice acquired a normal taken-for-granted feel. This normalization served as the basis of the somewhat thoughtless and routinized maintenance of slavery – or disposed people to make its practice habitual, customary, traditional, etc. This is evidenced by the fact that throughout two millennia, although isolated murmurings questioning slavery were sometimes voiced, no significant concerted struggle to counter slavery was mounted until the late eighteenth century. In this sense, Chapter Two will also establish the social context and parameters that antislavery activists would have to operate in and contest/challenge. Or, if one were to phrase it in the terminology used by Pouliot, Chapter Two will also contextualize the prevailing logic of practicality from which the majority of people were disposed not to question slavery – or not to give its legitimacy as a practice an afterthought.

## 2. Practice Clashes, Reflection and Change

If, as the previous section has affirmed, a practice focus can explain how slavery was perpetuated throughout millennia by reproducing the stability underwritten by the constancy of the solidification of shared understandings embedded in background knowledge, practices can also explain how, within this established social context, the deeply-rooted, normalized and routinized notions underwriting the legitimacy and practice of slavery were overturned. Just as the iterative nature of the practice focused processes outlined above conditioned thought patterns to dispose a large majority of people not to give slavery's legitimacy an afterthought, religious practices conditioned the dispositions of non-conformist groups to reflect and deliberate about – and question – slavery's justifiability. When Quakers and Evangelicals transposed these (practice conditioned) arguments into the political fray, their beliefs and arguments ran up against the majority's deeply entrenched (unreflective) dispositionally conditioned background knowledge(s) which underpinned slavery's normalization and perpetuation. In this sense, in Adler and Pouliot's words, through the Quaker-Evangelical challenge, the deeply-ingrained forgotten-as-such collective meanings contained in these background knowledges were "reflexively recovered."<sup>122</sup> A dialectic of contestation which eventually culminated in the renegotiation of the legitimacy of the practice of slavery ensued. This adds substance to the affirmation that a clash of practices was at the origin of the transformation of a millennia long enduring practice. It also qualifies practice theory's assertions that practices are suspended between structure and agency and it is at this intersection, by reading and making use of extant practices, that the human ability to do things differently is born. In this sense, practices are progenitors of change.

To substantiate these notions, Chapter Three will provide an overview of the specific practices that shaped the dispositions and conditioned the reflections of non-conformist,

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<sup>122</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18 and Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.", p. 271.

Quaker and Evangelical groups. The chapter will then review how the arguments and actions based on these reflections and existing practice templates translated into the political dynamics that culminated in the legal abolition of the British slave trade in 1807. The successful dissemination and take-up of antislavery practices altered the social context and parameters of action within Britain. Chapter Four will illustrate how this transformed social context contributed to the British political establishment's appropriation of the reformed slavery related understandings emanating from the domestic campaign. This in turn led, at the international level, to a dialectic of contestation analogous to the domestic one. Britain presided over the process of projecting the antislavery struggle into the international arena. This contestation process that targeted European nations eventually contributed to the successful delegitimization of the practice of slavery within the European and transatlantic European realms.

### 3. Resistance, Mutation and Stability of Practices

Points 1 and 2 outlined thus far have focused on how practices contribute to help explain change. However, in response to the dialectic contestation brought on by clashing practices, practices – especially well entrenched ones – can exhibit a robust resistance to change. This capacity to resist can condition evolving thought patterns to ensure some form of continuity. Consequently, practices therefore tend to have a propensity to mutate rather than come to a definitive end.

To elaborate how a practice foil can facilitate explaining the stability part of the equation, we return to Adler and Pouliot's definition of practices. The authors define practices as "competent performances...socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world."<sup>123</sup> On the notion of the competence

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<sup>123</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices."

of performances, they elaborate that the presence of others that can evaluate the competence of the performance on the basis of similar standards is crucial and implies the existence of “a public, of an audience able to appraise the practice.”<sup>124</sup> This inherently implies the existence of group membership characterized by mutual intelligibility and susceptibility in identifying and sustaining shared practices. If audiences (or stakeholders) lack this group membership element that facilitates the identification, maintenance and appraisal of shared practices, this can, once again, lead to dialectics of contestation regarding the legitimacy of specific activities. The existence of numerous stakeholders and multiple divergent – and potentially clashing – practices intrinsically complicates matters. The post-Atlantic international antislavery struggle represented a situation that was characterized by these types of conditions and circumstances.

Rooted in their specific experiences with transatlantic slavery and the transatlantic antislavery struggle, led by the British, European powers transposed (or imposed, often clumsily) their antislavery commitments and practices to Africa and the east. Similar standards between Europeans and Africans/easterners on which the competence of (anti)slavery practices could be judged were nonexistent or weak at best. The early period of the African and Eastern antislavery struggle can be construed as a formative period where group membership characterized by mutual intelligibility and susceptibility in identifying and sustaining shared antislavery (and other) practices was being negotiated and contested (akin to what non-conformists catalyzed on the domestic British scene and the British authorities facilitated on the continental European/transatlantic stage).

In addition, multiple sets of clashing practices of the various stakeholders involved in slavery made this phase of the internationalization of the antislavery struggle qualitatively different and relatively more complex. Within the expansion of European authority and

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

European international society, a tripartite division of clashing practices can be identified to substantiate these affirmations. The first, already covered in the previous paragraph, involves audience issues regarding the practice of variegated forms of bondage still considered legitimate by native populations and leaders. The second and third are the practices of colonization and antislavery. The creative gymnastics involved in trying to reconcile these often divergent practices led to a gradual abolition of slavery and an ensuing and complex attendant (re)negotiation of the legitimacy of practices that justifiably constituted – or not – slavery. This process (and the quest for suitable replacements) led to the expansion and/or mutation of extant bondage practices which eventually evolved into what we now commonly refer to as contemporary forms of slavery. These occurrences add substance to the sociological focus on how the stability of meanings and practices partly mirrors the hardening of material arrangements.<sup>125</sup> To illustrate, chapters five and six focus on some bondage practices that expanded and/or mutated and took on added significance in post-abolition settings in Africa and the East; many of these problems persist to this day or are still manifest in transfigured forms. In addition, Chapter Six examines how these dynamics played themselves out in international machinery and culminated in the redefinition of slavery in international law to encompass and address various forms of bondage.

To paraphrase Neumann, the three phased practice inspired theoretical framework (Practices as a Point of Origin, Practice Clashes, Reflection and Change, and Resistance, Mutation and Stability of Practices) outlined here necessarily reorients to tracking (empirical) changes that entail making dynamism – not equilibrium – a normal state. The framework also makes it difficult to disregard important material and discursive factors that contribute to environmental and contextual evolution; factors like material power, historical developments, evolution of institutions and practices, norms and epistemic understandings. The implication

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<sup>125</sup> Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory." For a good IR example see Pouliot, "The Materials of Practice: Nuclear Warheads, Rhetorical Commonplaces and Committee Meetings in Russian-Atlantic Relations."

of making dynamism the normal state within the theoretical framework set up in here offers a theoretical path to making the necessary links between the historical and the contemporary (advocated in the slavery case by Quirk). For the slavery case, it reiterates and contributes to elucidating, without downplaying the significant achievements of the antislavery struggle, Quirk's work that stresses that contemporary forms of slavery are evolutions – not anomalies – resulting from an unfinished and evolving struggle. In the process, the aim is to spur on theoretical IR discussions to move away from dichotomous tendencies to emphasize continuity **or** change to a reorientation to examine continuity **and** change – or continuity **within** change. This would add nuance to the sociologically inspired claim that things are in a constant state of flux within perpetually evolving environments. With the thesis' theoretical framework established, it is now time to turn to fleshing out and substantiating its claims.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Slavery: Historical Ubiquity and Normalization**



According to a consensus among historians, an organized and concerted effort to abolish slave trading – and by extension slavery – did not materialize until the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>126</sup> Musings about the appropriateness of slavery were evidently not confined to Britain and did not originate there; however, historians' claims that antislavery efforts flourished and gathered effective momentum within the British Empire are well founded.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, the British, not satisfied with abolishing their own trade and slavery within their empire (which resulted in the forgoing of their dominance of this lucrative and expanding branch of international commerce and its derivatives), turned their attention – at a significant cost to British coffers, national interests and lives – to internationalizing their domestic bans.<sup>128</sup> It is therefore safe to affirm that the British antislavery movement served as an

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<sup>126</sup> What Trevor Burnard and Gad Heuman have qualified as “one of the more surprising and undoubtedly more important social movements in human history.” Trevor Burnard and Gad Heuman, “Introduction,” in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Trevor Burnard and Gad Heuman (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> See Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810*, ———, “The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.”, Brown, “Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, ———, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*, Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, David, “Transnational Advocacy in the Eighteenth Century: Transatlantic Activism and the Anti-Slavery Movement.”, , Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823*, Seymour Drescher, “Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade,” *Past & Present*, no. 143 (1994), Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective*, David Eltis, James Walvin, and Svend E. Green-Pedersen, *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), Hamilton and Salmon, eds., *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*, Kaufmann and Pape, “Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, Mike Kaye, “The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807,” in *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, ed. Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), Klingberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England: A Study in English Humanitarianism*, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865*, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807*, Quirk, “The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.” Quirk and Richardson, “Religion, Urbanisation and Anti-Slavery Mobilisation in Britain, 1787-1833.”, Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*, Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870*. and Walvin, “The Rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition, 1787-1832.” among others.

<sup>128</sup> The British made it illegal for their subjects to trade slaves in 1807. A decision that has attracted considerable curiosity given that, at the time, Britain controlled 50 percent of the trade and produced 55 percent of the world's sugar, the main derivative of slave systems. See Kaufmann and Pape, “Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, p. 634. In 1833, the British went on to abolish slavery within their empire. Not only did this move cost the British authorities 20 million pounds in compensation to slaveholders, studies have also demonstrated that slavery was abolished at a time when the continuation of the slave trade and slavery had the potential for further growth and heightened importance for the British. See Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810*, Davis, “Capitalism, Abolition and Hegemony.”, Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*, ———, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labour Vs. Slavery in British Emancipation*, and Eltis, *Economic Growth and the*

essential fulcrum in the ideological shift which eventually led to a global abolition of slavery.<sup>129</sup>

Before turning to exploring the dynamics of the British antislavery movement however, the current chapter will provide an overview of the global ubiquity and deeply entrenched nature of the practices of slavery leading up to the initiation of the late eighteenth century concerted antislavery struggle. Within the theoretical framework elaborated in Chapter One, the function of this chapter will be to illustrate how we can construe the millennia long practices of slavery as functioning on the basis of the well entrenched collective meanings at rest in peoples' background knowledge(s). These entrenched collective meanings were so deeply-rooted that they came to be forgotten as such – and subconsciously regulated evolving thought patterns perpetuating bondage. Through the iterative nature of the processes of the inculcation of how things were done, the legitimacy of the practice of slavery acquired a normal taken-for-granted feel. This normalization served as the basis of the somewhat thoughtless and routinized maintenance of slavery – or disposed people to make its practice habitual, customary, conventional, etc.

Without first establishing the parameters of the slavery related cognitive and environmental backdrop from which the majority of people were disposed not to give the

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*Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.* among others. Finally, Kaufmann and Pape have calculated that anti-slave trade efforts from 1807 to 1867 cost Britain 1.8 percent of national income per annum. Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 636.

<sup>129</sup> See Andreas and Nadlemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations.*, Leslie Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807-1869* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)., Brown, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.", Hamilton and Salmon, eds., *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975.*, Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", Paul M. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000)., Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, Suzanne Miers, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975," in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2009)., Quirk, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.", ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.* and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.* among others.

legitimacy of slavery an afterthought, it would be difficult to understand how the Quaker-Evangelical questioning of slavery's justifiability "reflexively recovered"<sup>130</sup> and challenged the deeply-ingrained forgotten-as-such collective meanings underwriting and perpetuating its practice. This gives substance to the recurring notion in practice theory that "it is also from practices that social change originates"<sup>131</sup>, i.e., it is by reading and making use of extant practices that transformation becomes possible.

The current chapter will be divided into two sections. The first segment will provide a short historical snapshot of the state of slavery in the world leading up to the birth of the concerted and organized British movement to abolish the trade. This outline will be selective and brief and will serve the minimal objective of illustrating the fact of the historical ubiquity of slavery across time and geographical space. The second section will review a selective sample of chronological historical rationalizations used to underwrite and perpetuate the widely accepted legitimacy of the practice of slavery leading up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is meant to demonstrate how the robustness of the entrenchment of slavery conditioned evolving thought patterns to perpetuate its practice. Until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the minimal and fragmented tensions and anxieties expressed about slavery's appropriateness serve as testament of the fact that the practice's normalization and firm entrenchment comfortably overrode those concerns and kept underpinning its somewhat thoughtless and routinized perpetuation.

The focus of the rationalizations section will be on justifications emanating from western philosophical and theological (Christian) traditions. The reason for this bias stems from two well-founded assumptions. First, the British antislavery movement was, at its origins, religiously inspired. Therefore, the reference points for its abolitionist challenge lay

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<sup>130</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18 and Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.", p. 271.

<sup>131</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18 and Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory.", p. 3.

primarily within these traditions. As David Davis asserts, “the nations of Western Europe shared a whole network of beliefs and associations of slavery which derived from the Bible, the works of classical antiquity, and actual experience with various kinds of servitude.”<sup>132</sup> Second, operating through the British authorities and initially focusing on western European international society,<sup>133</sup> this same antislavery movement served as an essential fulcrum in the ideological shift which eventually led to a global abolition (legal) of slavery.<sup>134</sup>

### Slavery, Time and Geography

At the initiation of the British antislavery movement, slavery had been – and still was – relatively ubiquitous. Bondage practices had spanned throughout human history across geographical space. Various forms of slavery existed – or had existed – in China, Mesopotamia, ancient Greece and Rome, Africa, the Indian Ocean World (IOW)<sup>135</sup>, Europe and the Americas. Although numerous slavery studies exhibit a bias that concentrate on the transatlantic variant of the practice, transatlantic chattel slavery developed alongside chattel and other forms of slavery that long predated it in other world quarters. What follows is a short and selective review that illustrates this reality.

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<sup>132</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. vii.

<sup>133</sup> Quirk and Richardson, "Anti-Slavery, European Identity and International Society: A Macro-Historical Perspective."

<sup>134</sup> See Andreas and Nadlemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations*., Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807-1869*., Brown, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.", Hamilton and Salmon, eds., *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*., Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865*., Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*., ———, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", Quirk, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.", ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*. and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870*. among others.

<sup>135</sup> The IOW designates an area which “connected the major productive areas of Asia, China, India and Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) in a sophisticated and durable network of long distance maritime exchange of commodities, money, technology, ideas and people.” Gwyn Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Trevor Burnard and Gad Heuman (Oxon: Routledge, 2011)., p. 53.

## Ancient Greece

In classical Athens, nearly a third of the population were chattel slaves.<sup>136</sup> Slaves were often procured as booty from military ventures – a recurring theme across societies where slavery was present. The use of bondsmen was not limited to production activities and slave ownership was not confined to the wealthy. Slaves were engaged in a number of activities including mining, agriculture, domestic and artisan work; some state owned slaves were used for various tasks in the civil service, for record keeping and for policing. There existed an upper echelon of skilled slaves that would contribute monetary income to households.<sup>137</sup> However, all slaves were barred from pleading in court and were considered the legal property of their owners. Strict obedience was demanded and ensured by the ever present threat and/or use of violence – another recurring theme for all societies where slavery was at hand. With the exception of a few slaves engaged in commercial activities, sexual abuse and harsh treatment were common.<sup>138</sup> Some historians have concluded that Athenian democracy and democratic structures, rather than serving to protect slaves, were able to thrive specifically because slave labour gave Athenian citizens (especially farmers) the expendable time required to engage in politics (a claim that seems consistent, as we shall see shortly, with Aristotelian thoughts regarding slavery and society).<sup>139</sup>

## The Roman Empire

In the Roman Empire, estimates place the percentage of slaves in the overall population at 10 to 15 percent. In Italy, the number was as high as 30 to 40 percent.<sup>140</sup> As in

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<sup>136</sup> Niall McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Trevor Burnard and Gad Heuman (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 20-23. In Sparta, slavery was based on a system that made the Helot underclass its primary source for bondsmen/women.

<sup>137</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>138</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 66.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 70, ———, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, pp. 25-27., Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, pp. 6-7 and McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery.", pp. 20-23.

<sup>140</sup> McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery.", p. 26.

ancient Greece, slaves were engaged in a variety of activities including agriculture, domestic work and urban trades. Bondsmen were also purchased to increase the prestige and status of their owners. Slaves were also used in jobs requiring a certain degree of training such as secretarial work, teaching or helping with the management and running of businesses. Under the first emperors, state owned slaves even formed something comparable to a professional bureaucracy; some of these slaves could rise to positions of considerable influence and prominence.<sup>141</sup> However, similar to the situation in ancient Greece, under Roman law, slaves were considered property. There is evidence that the Romans endeavoured to protect slaves through limited legislative initiatives (inspired, as we shall later see, by Stoic philosophy), but no limits were set on what masters could do sexually with their slaves and evidence of generally harsh treatment is readily available.<sup>142</sup> Finally, in the Roman case, slavery is thought to have flourished because of a shortage of indigenous labour due to the importance of Roman peasants to the Roman military. This reality was compounded by the fact that, as citizens, these peasants' attending political rights made them difficult to exploit.<sup>143</sup>

## Africa

In the African case, numbers are more difficult to come by because of a lack of documentation. However, evidence has revealed, as Paul E. Lovejoy attests, that "Whether as a form of punishment or as a means of acquiring captives for purposes of sale and exploitation, slavery was integrated into the political economy and social structures of African societies."<sup>144</sup> The great variety of native terms to designate slavery in Africa attests to

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<sup>141</sup> Trevor Burnard, "The Atlantic Slave Trade," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Trevor Burnard and Gad Heuman (Oxon: Routledge, 2011). p. 83, Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, pp. 2-3 and McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery.", pp. 26-27.

<sup>142</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.* P. 8 and McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery.", pp. 28-29.

<sup>143</sup> McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery.", pp. 26-29.

<sup>144</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, "Slavery in Africa," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Trevor Burnard and Gad Heuman (Oxon: Routledge, 2011)., p. 38. For a description of the various historical forms of slavery practices present in Africa see chapter 3 in Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*

the antiquity and indigenous nature of the practice on that continent. As Trevor Burnard observes, "In the five centuries before the start of the Atlantic slave trade, about 5000 slaves per annum were sent across the Sahara from West Africa."<sup>145</sup> Slaves were usually obtained via war, military raids or kidnapping and were used for a wide variety of tasks<sup>146</sup> – mainly menial and dangerous jobs. They could be agricultural workers, traders, army conscripts, domestic workers and concubines. Similar to the situation in ancient Greece and Rome, slaves were considered the legal property of their owners. As illustrated by the use of slaves in various sacrificial rituals, masters' privileges often extended to the right of life and death of their property. And, as evidenced by the control of the destiny of slave children by their parents' masters, masters also regulated slaves' sexual and reproductive capacities.<sup>147</sup> Although some slaves could trade and amass wealth, gain prominence and influence through government (and/or military) service, or become highly assimilated and integrated in their masters' households and local society, African slavery was far from benign. Slaves remained the legal property of their masters; in general, they were treated harshly and remained firmly under their masters' control.<sup>148</sup>

As previously indicated, Africans did not simply consume their own. They exported slaves to various geographical quarters.<sup>149</sup> However, there is no question that the maritime arrival of Europeans unequivocally intensified this trade and had a profound transformative effect on African societies. Europeans tapped into a pre-existing local method of exploitation and transformed it into a sophisticated intercontinental system (the triangular trade<sup>150</sup>) based

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<sup>145</sup> Burnard, "The Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 83.

<sup>146</sup> See Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, chapter 3.

<sup>147</sup> Lovejoy, "Slavery in Africa.", pp. 38-40.

<sup>148</sup> See Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)., and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, chapter 3.

<sup>149</sup> By 1780, slaves represented over 90 percent of the value of all African exports. Burnard, "The Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 83

<sup>150</sup> The triangular trade consisted of ships sailing from Europe loaded with European goods to be traded for slaves on the African coast. The second leg (the middle passage) transported the slaves to the Americas where

on racial categories.<sup>151</sup> As a result of the loss of population destined for export as slaves, this intercontinental system altered the course of African history by constraining potential economic, social and political development. In addition – and paradoxically – the ostensible fight against slavery also facilitated the subjugation of African societies and the colonization of that continent.<sup>152</sup> Seventy percent of the approximately 17.5 million people forcibly removed from Africa for the purposes of slave trading between 1500 and 1900 went to the Americas; the remaining 30 percent went to Muslim North Africa, the Middle East and the IOW. These numbers do not include the significant number of slaves sent to the Muslim world before 1500 and after 1900.<sup>153</sup>

### The Indian Ocean World

In the IOW, individuals ended up in different states of servitude through various means. For example, the labour force required to maintain and operate sophisticated irrigation based agriculture was secured by turning war captives into agricultural slaves. Another large segment of slaves ended up in bondage through debt. As opposed to what is commonly understood as debt bondage, this type of slavery through indebtedness was not entered into voluntarily as a credit securing mechanism; it was imposed as a form of punishment for defaulting on debt. It is true that those that entered into voluntary debt bondage arrangements outnumbered slaves; however, through various means used by creditors, their debts increased

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they were auctioned off. Before returning to Europe, ships would be loaded with tropical goods to be sold in Europe and/or bills of exchange and money for slave sales. Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>151</sup> Burnard and Heuman, "Introduction.", p. 4, Lovejoy, "Slavery in Africa.", p. 39. As Burnard observes, it was the accepted legitimacy of slavery, based on the prevalent pre-existence of slavery in Africa that made African leaders amenable to selling human chattel to the Europeans. Burnard, "The Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 83.

<sup>152</sup> Andreas and Nadlemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations.*, p. 29, Brown, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 293, Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention.*, p. 190, Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, pp. xvii & xviii, Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 351, Lovejoy, "Slavery in Africa.", Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, pp. 37-38 and Howard Temperley, "Anti-Slavery as a Form of Cultural Imperialism," in *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Kent: Wm Dawson & Sons Ltd., 1980).

<sup>153</sup> Lovejoy, "Slavery in Africa.", p. 44. For a detailed review of slavery in Africa and its impact, see ———, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa.*



and their servitude became perpetual (in most cases hereditary). This made them indistinguishable from individuals forced into bondage.<sup>154</sup> Kidnapping and enslavement as legal punishment for crimes were also used as means to bind.

Slaves were used for a variety of functions in different sectors including agriculture, crafts, commerce, transport, military, security, domestic work, entertainment and sexual services. Depending on the region, the percentage of the populations engaged in slavery in the IOW ranged between 20 and 50 percent. Informed estimates about the number of people traded as slaves within the IOW (throughout the region's history) outnumber the estimated 12 million slaves that landed in the Americas. In India alone, Gwyn Campbell places the number of indigenous slaves in 1841 at 8 to 9 million; to put this into perspective, Campbell notes that this was nearly double the number of black slaves in the US in 1865.<sup>155</sup> And, as opposed to the American case, due mainly to availability and relatively lower transport costs, the majority of slaves in the IOW came from neighbouring regions. A final noteworthy distinction between the IOW and the American (and other) models of plantation slavery is the fact that slaves in the IOW (similar to Greece, Rome and Africa) enjoyed a varying gradation of traditional and prescribed rights that were sometimes upheld in law – most notably in Islamic societies. This prompts Campbell to conclude that

The slave-free dichotomy that characterised New World slave societies was premised on the notion of the absence or possession of individual liberty. This concept was largely absent in IOW societies, where each person had an allotted status that carried with it a multiplicity of rights and obligations, but which could also overlap with other statuses and change position in the hierarchy of statuses. This fluidity makes it difficult to forge hard-and-fast distinctions between types of servitude, or to contrast "slave" with "free".<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.", pp. 54-55.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 60. Miers has also made the same types of distinctions for the African case. See Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, chapter 3.

## Americas

Slavery was introduced to the Americas by the Iberian powers. By the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese and Spaniards were amassing great deals of wealth using plantation slave labour to produce sugar – a commodity that came to be known as “white gold” in various quarters.<sup>157</sup> It was this template that the English (and other European powers engaged in colonial acquisition and competition) later adopted to develop and exploit certain portions of the Americas. In essence, the exponentially increasing demand for sugar and tobacco (and later coffee) in Europe – that could be produced in the Americas – fuelled the racially based bondage that constituted the transatlantic traffic. This fact has prompted David Eltis and David Richardson to observe that the transatlantic slave trade was “the largest transoceanic forced migration in history” in which “relatively small improvements to the quality of life of a people on one continent [Europe]...were made possible by the removal of others from a second continent [Africa], and their draconian exploitation on yet a third [the Americas].”<sup>158</sup>

For a period, the Dutch dominated the transatlantic traffic. With their victory in the Anglo-Dutch wars and attendant colonial territorial acquisitions (present day New York, Pennsylvania and Jersey), the English also inherited the slave systems introduced to these territories by the Dutch. By the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the English had displaced the Dutch as the world’s premiere slave trading nation. Spain and Portugal continued to be significant players well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The English and the Iberian powers were joined in the trafficking game by other significant players such as France, the United States and Brazil. As opposed to other geographical quarters, an important distinction in the Americas was that the plantation model of slavery, with its attendant harshness, discipline and cruelty, was the overwhelmingly predominant model present on the American continent. This model

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<sup>157</sup> Betty Wood, "Origins of Slavery in the Americas," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Trevor Burnard and Gad Heuman (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p. 65.

<sup>158</sup> Quoted in Burnard, "The Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 80.

of slavery lacked the variety and attending gradation of rights and statuses evinced in other geographical regions like ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, Africa and the IOW. Consequently, until the abolition of slavery, the relatively cheap cost of acquiring new chattel meant that planters could readily afford to work slaves to death, which they very often did.

For the English, the turn to African labourers was facilitated by multiple factors. For various reasons, Native Americans were perceived as unsuitable labourers<sup>159</sup> and a steady decline of English indentured servants, along with an attending shift from tobacco to sugar production, created a labour shortage. This coincided with emerging negative portrayals of West and West Central Africans.<sup>160</sup> Because of the atrocious conditions in the middle passage of the triangular trade, of the nearly 12.5 million slaves loaded in Africa between 1501 and 1866, only 10.7 million made it across. At its peak in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, approximately 3.4 million people were forcibly transported from Africa to the Americas. An additional 3 million were trafficked between 1801 and 1850 to fuel Cuban plantations and the still thriving Brazilian slave markets.<sup>161</sup>

From its inception to the termination of the transatlantic trade, Portugal carried 47 percent of all slaves that landed in the Americas. Britain's numerically secondary position is offset by the fact that the British perfected the triangular trade. Even if they got involved later than the Portuguese and were engaged in the traffic for a significantly shorter period, the British were responsible for 26 percent of the overall total; over two-thirds of this volume of

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<sup>159</sup> This is not to imply that Native Americans were not used as slaves and that their use as bondsmen was inconsequential. However, a combination of factors, including the valuation of Natives' humanity, their poor resistance to diseases introduced by Europeans and developing stereotypes of Natives as drunken and lazy, made them unattractive as a viable source of labour. For more about this see Wood, "Origins of Slavery in the Americas.", pp. 66-68 and Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>160</sup> Burnard and Heuman, "Introduction.", p. 4 and Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, chapters 3-5.

<sup>161</sup> Burnard, "The Atlantic Slave Trade.", pp. 91-92. Fifty two percent of all slaves that made it across landed in Brazil. These numbers do not factor in the number of Africans lost during the 'seasoning' process shortly after their arrival in America. As well, the statistics cannot account for the psychological, emotional and physical trauma of people forcibly removed from their homes, separated from their families and whose labour was exploited with little or no personal gain or chance of returning home or being freed. For more on the Brazilian trade see Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807-1869.*

trading was conducted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century alone.<sup>162</sup> At the beginning of the antislavery movement, Britain was the world's premiere slaving nation.<sup>163</sup> It is for this reason that the origins, nature, reasons and timing of the British bans has been a popular and controversial focus for research.<sup>164</sup> In total volumes traded, the Portuguese and British were followed by France, Spain and the US.<sup>165</sup>

This short survey is not only indicative of the ubiquity of slavery through time and space. It also briefly highlights the variety of forms that bondage took in different geographical quarters and the presence of gradations of traditional and prescribed rights attending to differing forms; this point will be significant when exploring the continuities between traditional and contemporary forms of slavery in the second half of the thesis. For the moment, we will shift to the question of the historical legitimization of slavery. In order for practices associated with bondage to reach the scale that they had by the late eighteenth century, they had to be underwritten by legitimizing rationalizations. The meanings produced by these rationalizations, conditioned by practices which were enacted and re-enacted for decades, centuries or millennia, were relatively congealed. In other words, these practices functioned on the basis of a form of entrenched (background) knowledge, which were further solidified by the iterative qualities of the performance of the practices in question. Involved reflection and deliberation about the legitimacy of slavery practices was rare, isolated and relatively insignificant.

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<sup>162</sup> Burnard, "The Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 91.

<sup>163</sup> By 1806, Britain controlled 50 percent of the trade and produced 55 percent of the world's sugar, the main derivative of slave systems. See Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 634., Quirk and Richardson, "Religion, Urbanisation and Anti-Slavery Mobilisation in Britain, 1787-1833.", p. 266.

<sup>164</sup> Brown, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p.p. 281-282 and 288-290. As Ian Clark has outlined, debates are primarily centred around the material vs. ideational divide See Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 45.

<sup>165</sup> Burnard, "The Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 91.

Historical Rationalizations for Slavery

For 3,000 years – from the time of Moses to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century – virtually every major statesman, philosopher, theologian, writer and critic accepted the existence and legitimacy of slavery. The word ‘accepted’ is chosen deliberately, for those men of affairs and moulders of thought neither excused, condoned, pardoned nor forgave the institution. They did not have to; they were not burdened by the view that slavery was wrong. Slavery was considered to be part of the natural scheme of things. ‘From the hour of their birth’, said Aristotle, ‘some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.’<sup>166</sup>

While investigating some questions raised by Robert Fogel’s above statement, Peter Garnsey tempers Fogel’s affirmations by observing that there were in fact voices questioning the legitimacy of slavery during the 3,000 year period that Fogel refers to.<sup>167</sup> However, Garnsey qualifies this affirmation by adding that “These overt critiques are on the surface few, weak and isolated, not the stuff, one might imagine, to provoke a concerted and vigorous defence of the institution.”<sup>168</sup> In fact, the weakness, relative rarity and fragmented nature of these critiques are testament to the fact that slavery was not a matter of central concern.<sup>169</sup> This sentiment is echoed in Davis’ expansive works on the problems of slavery in western culture.<sup>170</sup> Ultimately, the inequity and injustice of slavery did raise some doubts, anxieties and criticisms; however, most of these were easily assuaged. As Davis asserts and demonstrates “slavery has always been a source of social and psychological tension, but in Western culture it was associated with certain religious and philosophical doctrines that gave it the highest sanction.”<sup>171</sup> The collective assessments of scholars like Fogel, Garnsey and Davis are consistent with the notion that the practices associated with slavery were

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<sup>166</sup> Robert Fogel quoted in Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 9.

<sup>167</sup> Brion Davis has also demonstrated this fact. See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, ———, *Slavery and Human Progress.* and ———, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*

<sup>168</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 11.

<sup>169</sup> Brown, “Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, p. 282.

<sup>170</sup> See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, ———, *Slavery and Human Progress.* and ———, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*

<sup>171</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. ix and 93.

underpinned by background knowledge. In other words, the meanings underpinning the practice of slavery were not only fixed but also forgotten. Bondage practices acquired an inertial quality on the basis of repetitive and unreflective performances and re-enactments.

### Justifications

#### Aristotle

“...from the ancient world we find no assertion that slavery was an intolerable evil that should be eradicated by any civilized nation.”<sup>172</sup> That slavery was largely accepted and unchallenged<sup>173</sup> in Ancient Greece is best epitomized by Aristotle’s writings on the matter. On the basis of Plato’s claim that some individuals had a poor grasp of reason,<sup>174</sup> which made their enslavement necessary and advantageous to both masters and enslaved, Aristotle elaborated what has come to be known since as natural slave theory. The theory is underpinned by two main assumptions. First, a conceptualization that some members of the species, based on their inferiority relative to others, were naturally predisposed to be slaves (natural slaves). And consequently, that within society, being held in bondage would be beneficial and therefore the most suitable condition not only for ‘natural slaves’, but for the whole of the collective.<sup>175</sup> As we shall see shortly, many later justifications were quite similar or varied slightly on one and/or both of these themes.

Aristotle’s notions of the inferiority of some (natural slaves) and how everyone would be happiest and the collective would be best served if each person did what his/her innate capacities and limitations allowed them to do well are illustrated in the following passages of

*The Politics*:

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>173</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*., p. 9.

<sup>174</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 67 and 70 and Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*., p. 14.

<sup>175</sup> See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 70, Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*. (specifically chapter 8) or McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery.", p. 25.

For he is by nature a slave who is capable of belonging to another (and that is why he does so belong), and who participates in reason so far as to apprehend it but not to possess it; for the animals other than men are subservient not to reason, by apprehending it, but to feelings.<sup>176</sup>

It is therefore clear from these considerations that in the most nobly constituted state, and the one that possesses men that are absolutely just...the citizens must not live a mechanic or a mercantile life – for such a life is ignoble and inimical to virtue; nor yet must those who are to be citizens in the best state be tillers of the soil – for leisure is needed both for the development of virtue and for active participation in politics.<sup>177</sup>

The polis is one form of partnership of similar people, and its object is the best life that is possible. And...the greatest good is happiness, and this is some perfect activity or employment of virtue...<sup>178</sup>

## The Stoics

After Plato and Aristotle, through a recovery of the earlier Socratic division of mind and body, philosophical concerns about moral and spiritual slavery became more prevalent than any apprehensions about slavery's physical, legal and institutional manifestations.<sup>179</sup> This assertion is exemplified, among others, in the thoughts and writings of people like Zeno, Diogenes, Cicero, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius – loosely classified as Stoics.<sup>180</sup> In contrast to Aristotelian thought, on the basis of their kinship as rational beings and their descent from common stock, Stoics represented men in a more egalitarian light.<sup>181</sup> These relatively egalitarian notions are exemplified in the following short passages from Seneca and Cicero respectively.

(Please remember) that the man whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies, and on equal terms with yourself breathes, lives and dies.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Cited in Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 109.

<sup>177</sup> Cited in Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>178</sup> Cited in Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>179</sup> This is part and parcel of what Davis refers to as “the product of a developing trend in philosophy which exhibited a profound indifference to worldly problems.” Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 72.

<sup>180</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 17 and 128 and McKeown, “Greek and Roman Slavery.”, p. 31.

<sup>181</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 142 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 75.

<sup>182</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 143.

The mere fact of their common humanity requires that one human should feel another man to be akin to him.<sup>183</sup>

However, the stoics' main concerns lay in the moral and spiritual dimensions of human existence. True slavery was a property of the individual mind or soul. The true slave was one that allowed emotions, passions and external physical matters and conditions to consume their being. Therefore, a master addicted to luxury could be more of a slave than his bondsman. The true test of a man's worth was not his legal status but his morality and virtue.<sup>184</sup> Given the irrelevance of the condition of physical bondage in relation to spiritual bondage (and morality, freedom and virtue), the physical manifestation of slavery was unimportant and remained largely unaddressed.<sup>185</sup>

Ultimately, these convictions led to a form of quietism in which external conditions like slavery were to be endured, not resisted; the true measure of a man was to be judged in accordance with how he dealt with his lot in life.<sup>186</sup> The sufficiency of virtue for happiness made the virtuous individual immune to misfortune. Paradoxically, by preaching acceptance of one's destiny and extolling the pursuit of virtue instead, even if this school of thought was inherently antithetical to Aristotelian style natural slave theory, by undermining resistance to it, Stoicism served as an eloquent justification and reinforcement of bondage. In this sense, Stoicism was deterministic. Late Stoics counselled slaves to accept their fate and to serve their masters well. This is where moral goodness – and by extension, happiness – rested. They also implored masters to treat their slaves well. However, there is no evidence to suggest that stoic philosophy was willing to advance beyond this point. As Garnsey explains

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 72 and 74-75.

<sup>185</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*., p. 129 and 131. With the possible exception of Seneca who admonished masters to treat their slaves with kindness on the basis of their common kinship. Even Seneca however, stopped short of addressing the deeper issue of the morality of slavery. These types of developments have been aptly termed by WL Westermann as a "frigid sympathy" for the slave. See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., pp. 76-78.

<sup>186</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 76, Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*., pp. 16-19 and chapter 9 and McKeown, "Greek and Roman Slavery.", pp. 31-32.



“In practice, little changed...That the critical potential of Stoicism was not realized shows how deeply slavery as an institution was entrenched in Graeco-Roman society, including its upper reaches, where Stoic doctrine circulated.”<sup>187</sup>

### Theologians and Early Church Fathers

Following the Greco-Roman period, theology produced a considerable portion of some historically influential and perduring justifications for slavery. Early religious thought served as a bridge between classical and Hellenistic notions about slavery and later Christian reflections on bondage. In general, early theologians mirrored stoicism's egalitarian footing and stuck to the stoic focus on spiritual slavery; consequently, physical bondage, and by extension the legal institution of slavery, was not worth investigating.<sup>188</sup> A major difference between the Stoics and early theologians however, lay in the theological reversal of the negative connotation associated with being a slave. For Stoics, being a slave was an unequivocally objectionable state. In contrast however, theologians lauded the state of being God's bondservant. In Judaism, this is exemplified in the writings of Philo of Alexandria. “For *to be the slave of God (douleuein)* is the highest boast of men, a treasure more precious not only than freedom, but than wealth and power and all that mortals most cherish.”<sup>189</sup> Judaism's notion of the glory of being God's bondsmen was rooted in the perception that God had freed the ancient Israelites from bondage in Egypt in order for them to be conferred with the special status of being His slaves.<sup>190</sup>

As opposed to stoicism however, as a result of God's sanctioning of physical slavery in specific cases in scripture, theologians were eventually forced to deal with the nature of physical as well as spiritual bondage. This tension was generated by the Old Testament

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<sup>187</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 151.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 64.

stories of Canaan, grandson of Noah, and Esau, son of Isaac. Philo attempted to reconcile the strain with an uncomfortable marriage of stoicism with a religious rendition of Aristotelian natural slave theory.<sup>191</sup> For Philo, Isaac's enslavement of Esau to his younger sibling Jacob is sanctioned by Jehovah and based on a deficiency in Esau's capacities to attain virtue.

Once again, of Jacob and Esau, when still in the womb, God declares that the one is a ruler and leader and master but that Esau is a subject and a slave. For God the maker of living beings knows well the different pieces of his own handiwork, *even before He has thoroughly chiselled and consummated them*, and the faculties which they are to display at a later time, in a word, their deeds and experiences. And so when Rebecca, the soul that waits on God, goes to inquire of God, He tells her in reply, 'Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy belly, and one people shall be above the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger (Gen. 25:23). *For in God's judgement that which is base and irrational is by nature a slave*, but that which is of fine character and endowed with reason and better, is princely and free. And this not only when wither is full-grown in soul, but *even if their development is still uncertain*.<sup>192</sup>

As a result of these deficiencies, and by sanction of God, it is in Esau's benefit to be enslaved.

...to the elder in compassion they granted an inferior station to serve his brother, rightly thinking that it is not good for the fool to be his own master.<sup>193</sup>

Thus ill-disciplined and foolish slaves receive profit from a master who frightens them, for they fear his threats and menaces and thus involuntarily are schooled by fear. All such may well learn the untruth, which will benefit them, if they cannot be brought to wisdom by truth.<sup>194</sup>

The end result of Philo's moves sanctions the subjection of spiritual slavery to physical bondage. The story of Jacob and Esau is used to justify the quality of the Jews being God's chosen bondservants. As evidenced in the quote justifying the enslavement of Esau, the Israelites are represented as the younger of two nations (Jacob) to be split from Rebecca's belly and to rule over the elder nation of Egypt (represented by Esau). Ultimately, as it related

<sup>191</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 164.

<sup>192</sup> Cited in Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>193</sup> Cited in Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>194</sup> Cited in Ibid., p. 169.

to slavery, a novel element in Philo's work lay in the fact that he departed from a strict focus on the moral realm and started exploring the origins and justifications for physical and institutional slavery.

In many senses, Paul's writings on slavery mirror Philo and Stoicism. However, Paul used a distinctively Christian foil to justify his assertions. He begins with the notion that all men are equal in the eyes of God. From this point of origin, he pushes the desirability of being God's bondservant. In this sense, what matters most is that all men, in their earthly existence, are in God's service (as opposed to serving other men).<sup>195</sup> Here, Christ's service and suffering to achieve salvation is held up as a model to aspire to.

P8 I Peter 2: 18-21

21. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips.

23. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly.<sup>196</sup>

One of the distinctively Christian elements in Paul's thought flows from the notion that, on the basis of the performance of services to Him, God holds out the prospects of reward and punishment for his subjects in the next world. Physical slaves serving earthly masters well are in reality serving God well, and will consequently be rewarded in the afterlife. Conversely, those that serve poorly in the earthly realm will be punished in the afterlife. Masters were also subject to the same judgement; if they wished to obtain Godly rewards, they had to treat their slaves fairly.

P5 Ephesians 6: 5-8

5. Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as to Christ;

6. Not in the way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

<sup>195</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, pp. 65 and 84.

<sup>196</sup> Cited in Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 179.

7. Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

8. Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours in heaven, and that there is no partiality with Him.<sup>197</sup>

To justify the bestowal of the status of being God's chosen bondservants to Christians over his own people (the Jews), Paul reverts, like Philo, to the story of Jacob and Esau. In his rendition however, the enslavement of Esau represents a metaphor for the displacement of the Jews by Christians. As opposed to Philo's reliance on man's (Esau's) deficiencies to justify subordination (to Jacob), Paul sees Esau's enslavement as unmerited yet condoned by God. This leads Paul to the question of whether there is injustice in God. Even if he responds in a resoundingly negative fashion to this query, he admits that he cannot resolve this dilemma. He attributes his inability to do so to his limitations as a mere mortal. At the end of the day, Paul appeals to a faith in the mysticism of God's plan; a plan that is beyond the pale of human comprehension.

Ultimately then, bad slavery, which Paul classifies as slavery to sin, supersedes physical slavery as a consideration for concern. Conversely, good slavery, namely the desirability and prioritization of being a good bondservant to God, serves as a vehicle and inherent justification for the existence of physical slavery and leads to the admonition that men accept (and not resist) the lots that they are dealt in life. In essence, Paul's discussions of slavery exhibit a distinctively conservative feel that provides a disincentive against social change in the worldly realm. In Garnsey's estimation, Paul's counsel pursues "the relatively modest aim of putting Christian ethical norms into operation *within* existing social structures. Those instructions...included nothing that could have threatened the social structure of

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<sup>197</sup> Cited in Ibid., p. 178.

slavery. It might even be suggested that they contained the recipe for its survival and future strength.”<sup>198</sup>

In large parts, early church fathers based their thoughts about slavery on Philo’s and Paul’s works. Ambrose restated that slavery of the body was an insignificant consideration in relation to the question of slavery of the soul.<sup>199</sup> Echoing Philo, he begins with egalitarian precepts. In revisiting the stories of Esau and Joseph, he reiterates that “...*natura* does not make a man a slave but folly does, just as manumission does not make a man free but wisdom does”, and “a contract [*sc.* of sale] does not change one’s status nor take away the freedom that goes with wisdom. Many free men are servants of a wise slave and he is a wise slave who rules his foolish masters...”<sup>200</sup> For Stoics, true slavery was about letting one’s self be governed by emotions and passions. Through the pursuit of virtue however, although very rare and difficult, this state could potentially be transcended. Here, Ambrose departs from Stoic doctrine and not unlike Philo, tries to uncomfortably marry the notion of slavery to sin with Aristotelian natural slavery precepts.<sup>201</sup>

For Ambrose, a fool’s deficiency is rooted in enduring mental and moral deficits. Therefore, making the fool a slave in a legal slave-master relationship would be beneficial to both parties. Physical slavery was clearly preferable to the potentially more spiritually damaging effects of folly.<sup>202</sup> Yet, Ambrose clearly echoes Paul in seeing no injustice in the scriptural examples of subordination. And, like Paul, he hearkens back to a faith in God’s plan to justify this assertion. However, in attributing slavery to folly, he inconsistently supplements a belief in egalitarianism and mysticism with an injection about men’s innate deficiencies (and, by extension, the division of the species into superior and inferior

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>199</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 87.

<sup>200</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>201</sup> A move characterized as an illegitimate transaction by Garnsey. See Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

members). This may be why, unlike Paul, Ambrose did not seem bothered by the dilemma of the (in)justice of God's acts of subordination.

It becomes clear that wisdom – in contradistinction to folly – was Ambrose's key to attaining freedom. The Christianizing aspect in Ambrose comes into play when we get to the question of how to attain wisdom. The answer is that all who accept Christ are wise, and therefore by extension, free. Although freedom is precious, through a good type of slavery, namely service to our fellow men (which Ambrose equates with charity and a Christian ethic modelled on Paul and Christ), we can aspire to the attainment of the higher good of friendship with God.<sup>203</sup> Ultimately however, even if sin and slavery to sin were key concepts in Ambrose, in a familiar pattern, these elements remained confined to the spiritual and moral realm. In this sense, within the contradictions of his thoughts on slavery, Ambrose firmly remained within the boundaries of Philonic and Stoic discourse. It is on the basis of some of the groundwork laid by Ambrose that Augustine, by paying closer attention to the physical enslavements of Esau and Canaan in scripture, elaborated the first thorough (and enduring) Christian theory about the origins and justifications of slavery. The theory was based on Augustine's development of the doctrine of original sin.

At a general level, Augustine's elaboration of a theory justifying slavery hinges on his larger notion of divine order (God's plan for man). A key component of this notion is that the laws that govern men, which are elaborated by political authorities, have God's sanction.<sup>204</sup> "God has handed down to the race of men even the man-made laws through the medium of emperors and kings of the world."<sup>205</sup> Although masters have a duty to practice a Christian ethic of service to others and cultivate the Christian faith amongst all members of their households (including slaves), this duty is overridden by the necessity to maintain societal

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p. 200-201.

<sup>204</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 88.

<sup>205</sup> Cited in Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*., p. 208.

stability and order – which, for Augustine, begins at the household level and necessitates the maintenance of traditional power structures.<sup>206</sup> There is a definite Aristotelian ring here. As Garnsey affirms “Augustine asserts...that harmony in the parts – that is, households – engenders harmony in the whole – that is, the city” and “it follows...that domestic peace ministers to civic peace, that is, that the ordered agreement concerning command and obedience among those who dwell together in a household ministers to the ordered agreement concerning command and obedience among citizens.”<sup>207</sup>

Flowing from this concern for stability and order, from the perspective of slaves, similar to Paul and Ambrose, Augustine establishes Christ’s suffering as a fundamental ground for admonishing not to rebel against masters.

AUG5 Ennarrationes in Psalmos 124.7-8 (part)

7. And to give strength to the slave, He has said: ‘Serve as I did before you, I served bad masters.’...He gave back love for hatred. For He said: ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ If the Lord of heaven and earth through whom all things were made was a slave to unworthy people, if he interceded for the mad and the furious, and showed himself in his approach to them as a kind of physician (for physicians, those trained in the art of healing, are slaves to the sick); how much more should a man not disdain to serve even a bad master, with all his heart and complete good will? Look, a better man is slave to a worse man, but only for a time.<sup>208</sup>

And, like his teacher Ambrose, Augustine clearly believed that physical slavery was unequivocally preferable to being a slave to sin. Consequently, it is to the concept of sin that Augustine turns to elaborate a fully-fledged Christian theory of the origins of, and justifications for, slavery.

The prime cause of slavery is sin, so that man was put under man in a state of bondage; and this can be only by a judgement of God, in

<sup>206</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 88.

<sup>207</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., pp. 210-211

whom there is no unrighteousness, and who knows how to assign  
divers punishments according to the deserts of the sinners.<sup>209</sup>

In essence, Augustine replaces elements from explanations relying on nature, philosophy or mysticism by his doctrine of sin. In other words, the reason that slavery not only exists but is also justifiable is attributed to man's condition as a sinner.<sup>210</sup> To elaborate, Augustine revisits the perennial cases of Canaan and Esau. In Canaan's case, his loss of freedom is directly attributable to his father's (Ham) moral weakness in transgressing (sinning) against his grandfather (Noah); the punishment is therefore merited and just.<sup>211</sup> In Esau's case however, his fate is sealed long before (in the womb) he has an opportunity to transgress and deserve punishment. In trying to account for this seemingly unmerited punishment, Augustine provides a somewhat ambiguous answer; he reverts to his notion of original sin.

For Augustine, Esau's punishment was deserved by virtue of his descent from Adam. Responsibility for the chastisement belonged to man (Adam's misuse of the gift of free will), not God. Moreover, in trying to absolve God for His seemingly random choice of punishing Esau rather than Jacob (who would be equally guilty, as any other man or woman, of original sin), Augustine, like Paul and Ambrose, reverts back to mysticism; the notion that the answer to this problematic lies beyond the pale of human comprehension. The only human understanding attributable to the supplanting of the elder Esau by his younger sibling Jacob is in the allegory of Christians displacing the Jews as God's chosen people.<sup>212</sup> Notwithstanding this reversion to mysticism, the crucial point here is that the logic of Augustine's theory of the origins of, and justifications for, slavery hinges on man (not God). Before the Fall, servitude

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<sup>209</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>210</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 88.

<sup>211</sup> Although the reason why it is Canaan rather than the actual transgressor (his father Ham) that is punished is not explored. See Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 213. As well, there is ongoing debate about the nature of Ham's transgression; suggestions include making fun of Noah while naked, castration, sodomy and indiscretion with father's wife. See Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, pp. 86-88.

<sup>212</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, pp. 213-216.



of man to man did not exist and was therefore not intended in God's order of nature. Following the Fall, as part of God's judgement, slavery became one form of divine punishment for sin. This punishment could either be meted out for one's own specific sins, by virtue of the specific sins of others (as in Canaan's punishment for his father's transgressions) or simply as a result of man's condition as an original sinner.<sup>213</sup>

As it related to slavery, Augustine's contributions were innovative in two respects. First, his theory did not limit itself to moral slavery but covered physical slavery as well. Second, his theory was all encompassing in the sense that it could adequately account for the existence and justifiability of all forms of slavery – past and present – including war captives and various other types of bondage resulting from adversity or misfortune.<sup>214</sup> Like Paul, Augustine's counsel to slaves was conservative. Even if physical slavery was a miserable state to be in, it was preferable to spiritual slavery.<sup>215</sup> As well, within the context of the times, theologians were heavily influenced by an overarching concern to establish, consolidate and strengthen the authority of the church. In this sense, slavery was part of a divine order, a disciplining force to restrain evil and rebellion.<sup>216</sup>

Ultimately then, slavery existed and was justifiable as a form of Godly punishment for man's transgressions. It was part of God's divine order (His plan for man) and the justifiability of the practice was thus not questionable. Garnsey neatly sums up Augustinian notions regarding slavery by affirming that

Augustine squared the circle by deciding that slavery is part of God's plan for mankind, *and* that mankind rather than God is accountable for its introduction because of Adam's guilt which all humans share. This solution at once sanctioned the existence of slavery and headed off any enquiry as to its ethical basis. The connection of slavery with sin was established, but not in such a way as to undermine the institution.

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<sup>213</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 88 and Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*., pp. 213-219.

<sup>214</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*., pp. 217-219.

<sup>215</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 88.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

Sin had issued in slavery, but slavery was not itself sin; it could not be if it was an aspect of God's (just) judgement of men.<sup>217</sup>

Augustine's key contributions on the origins of and justifications for slavery left a weighty legacy that the medieval Church was unable to lift. Davis goes as far as asserting that the rationalizations of the early church fathers (regarding slavery) were to remain highly influential on European attitudes for more than a millennium.<sup>218</sup>

### The Medieval and Early Modern Period

Davis locates the reasons for the durability of the church fathers' rationalizations on European attitudes in men's conceptions of God's purpose.

To question the ethical basis of slavery, even when the institution was disappearing from view [in Europe], would be to question fundamental conceptions of God's purpose and man's history and destiny. If slavery were an evil and performed no divinely appointed function, then why had God authorized it in Scripture and permitted it to exist in nearly every nation?<sup>219</sup>

Questioning slavery – or any established worldly institution for that matter – would cast a shadow of doubt on the Creator's well-organized and fixed configuration of the universe. Allowing a margin for men to abolish worldly institutions could imply the effective possibility of the cleansing of sins and an accompanying notion of perfectibility and happiness on earth. As Davis asserts, "...Christianity embodied ideas of liberation and perfection that were potentially explosive when torn from their protective casings and ignited in the charged atmosphere of class rivalry and discontent."<sup>220</sup> The most effective container for this explosive potential lay in the doctrine of original sin, which, as we have seen, was intimately intertwined with notions of slavery. Rather than embrace the potential for

<sup>217</sup> Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine.*, p. 241.

<sup>218</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 91.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

Christianity to serve as a vehicle for liberation, medieval theorists remained within the confines of existing notions regarding constituent parts of established orders – both good and bad – as necessary elements forming a properly functioning whole. In this sense, God’s goodness was reflected in the opulence and the harmony of his creation. Slavery was part and parcel of this creation and served a divine function.<sup>221</sup>

These currents are exemplified in one of the medieval period’s most notable theologians and philosophers, Saint Thomas Aquinas. Although Aquinas agreed with the Stoics and early church fathers about the fact that slavery could not have been present in man’s original state (pre Fall), he disagreed with their conceptualization that men would have lived in a perfect state of liberty and equality before the Fall. Similar to Augustine, Aquinas emphasized the importance of authority and rule. If angels in heaven lived under conditions of hierarchical authority and rule on the basis of merit, why would we surmise that man’s condition in his original state was qualitatively different than those that existed in heaven?<sup>222</sup> This led Aquinas to the conclusion that the disparity in man’s condition in the existing social order and his original state was not as great as others assumed. As Davis asserts, for Aquinas “The difference between slavery and natural subordination was more of degree than of kind.”<sup>223</sup>

Although Aquinas believed that slavery was occasioned by sin, he argued that there was more to the legitimacy of slavery. With a distinctive emphasis on authority and rule, in his attempt to reconcile slavery with natural law, Aquinas elaborated a complex scheme of superimposed steps that justified the existence and purpose of slavery within a divinely appointed order. This reconciliation of slavery with natural law was achieved through Aquinas’ bifurcation of nature into first and second intentions. Given that slavery did not

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

exist in the state of nature (man's pre Fall state), it was clearly contrary to the first intention of nature – and by consequence natural law. However, as a result of a reality adjusted to concord with man's limited capacities (as evidenced by the Fall), slavery became compatible with the second intention of nature. In other words, although slavery was seemingly incompatible in the relatively more perfect state during the period before the Fall, in man's modified environment in the existing world, slavery was "natural and tolerable...[and identifiable] with the rational structure of being, which required each individual to accept...the necessity of subordination to higher authority."<sup>224</sup>

Another notable evolution during the medieval and renaissance periods was the development of a prejudice against the enslavement of fellow Christians.<sup>225</sup> Given what has thus far been reviewed in the writings of Christian theologians and philosophers, this evolution is not surprising. For Paul, Ambrose, Augustine and Aquinas, the key to liberation from being a slave to sin rested in becoming God's bondservant – more specifically, the Christian God's bondservant. This notion inherently contained within it potential tensions regarding the enslavement of those that had embraced Christianity. The logical extension flowing from this wisdom was that non-Christians, who were undeserving of freedom by virtue of their faith, were therefore fair game. These assumptions guided Papal instructions regarding the enslavement of Africans when Europeans first came into contact with black Africa.<sup>226</sup> It also gave a renewed breath to the process of making (or keeping) slavery justifiable on the basis of the inferiority of race and ethnic origins, a thread that had remained present – albeit in different forms and renditions – since the elaboration of Aristotelian natural slave theory. The enduring presence of this thread of thought adds further credence to the notion that practices associated with slavery functioned on the basis of a form of

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 96 and ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 43.

<sup>225</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 100.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

entrenched (background) knowledge, which was inspired by the iterative qualities of the performance of these very practices – again, with little recourse to involved reflection. Entrenched practices conditioned modes of thought to make them amenable to the survival and continuation of the practices in question.

One could expect that the Renaissance, with its attendant movement to relatively secular views of human institutions based on reason, would have served as a boon for reversing long established religiously inspired thinking about the legitimacy of slavery. However, as Davis observes,

...no one could lightly challenge an institution approved not only by the Fathers and canons of the Church, but by the most illustrious writers of antiquity. Men who showed increasing respect for Plato, Aristotle and Roman law would not be likely to condemn slavery as an intrinsic evil. Hence the revival of classical learning, which may have helped to liberate the mind of Europe from bondage to ignorance and superstition, only reinforced the traditional justifications for slavery.<sup>227</sup>

As evidenced by the positions of the Stoics, early Church Fathers, Augustine and Aquinas, the institution of slavery had an uncanny capacity to accommodate dualisms in thought – shaped in large part by its long practice. The potential of the relatively egalitarian Stoic notion of man's kinship as rational beings descending from common stock was overshadowed by the quest to overcome spiritual slavery by preaching acceptance of one's station and destiny and extolling the pursuit of virtue instead. For Philo, Paul and Ambrose, the notion that all men were equal in the eyes of God was eclipsed by the desirability and prioritization of overcoming spiritual slavery by being a good bondservant to God. This came at the expense of accepting (and not resisting) the lots that men were dealt with in life while holding out for Godly rewards in an afterlife. For Augustine and Aquinas, overarching concerns for order, rule and authority obscured the fact that slavery was inconsistent with

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

God's plan as evidenced by man's pre Fall state. For Augustine, the tension was overcome through the elaboration of the doctrine of original sin which explained the origins of slavery and served as a justification for its practice, while Aquinas reverted to his notion of first and second intentions of nature to explain how slavery was a necessary component of a divinely ordained rational structure of being.

During and after the Reformation, the intensified philosophical penchants of secularization that preceded the Enlightenment were equally unable to overturn the ingrained legitimacy of slavery. The greatest testament to this fact lay in slavery's ability to accommodate, by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, what Davis has characterized as "the greatest dualism of all – the momentous division between an increasing devotion to liberty in Europe and an expanding mercantile system based on Negro labour in America."<sup>228</sup> With the gradual erosion of the idea that natural law served as a bridge linking human institutions with – and corresponding to – man's relatively more perfect natural state, the ground for justifying the institution of slavery shifted to a more utilitarian base. For many, practicality and circumstance, as evidenced by the near universal slavery practices of nations for over a millennium, became a sufficient barometer to underwrite the legitimacy of the institution.<sup>229</sup> It was irrelevant whether or not these practices met with ideal standards which corresponded with natural law (or man's natural state). The law of nations took precedence. An important factor that contributed to these types of positions was the heightened yearning for stability and order during and after the Reformation.

A notable figure that fell outside this pattern of justifying slavery on the basis of utility and established practice is French philosopher Jean Bodin. Davis identifies Bodin as an

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

originator of a proper antislavery philosophy.<sup>230</sup> In a marked departure from the contemporaneous traditional foci on natural law, scholastic reasoning and the law of nations, Bodin favoured reducing issues to simpler dichotomies and, through a process of elimination, abandoning elements that contravened common sense. Applied to slavery for example, this meant that

...the Aristotelian case for natural slavery would hold only if the brutal, rich and ignorant obeyed the wise prudent and humble. The Augustinian theory of slavery as a punishment for sin would be valid only if masters were agents of the divine will and invariably obeyed God's laws. The provisions of *jus gentium* for enslaving prisoners of war were impractical as well as inhumane, for it was no charity to spare a man's life only to exploit his labour; and if examples were wanted to deter future aggressors, it would be more effective to kill all captives. The appeal to precedent and to the common practice of nations was groundless, since every kind of wickedness, including human sacrifice, had been regarded as virtuous at some time in history.<sup>231</sup>

However, even with the shifts from religious and natural law orientations to more rational and utilitarian grounds, the fact that Bodin's thoughts on slavery made no significant inroads for another two centuries is once again indicative of the inertial strength of the institution of slavery; a conditioning ability which was acquired and accumulated through iterative practices produced and reproduced for over a millennium (on the basis of background knowledge), and which exhibited a remarkable capacity to adapt and resist radical change. Even within the significant philosophical shifts from religious to rational and secular dimensions, the slavery related thoughts of Grotius, Hobbes and Locke serve to illustrate how long-entrenched bondage practices were incorporated and accommodated within fundamentally different thought frameworks – giving further credence to the thought conditioning properties and capacities of extant practices. Rather than apprehending the seemingly inherent potential contained within these relatively novel patterns of thought to

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

question the legitimacy of the institution, the grounds to justify its existence and practice simply shifted.

By emphasizing the human capacity to reason divorced from divine revelation, Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius is credited with elevating and liberating human will from constraining Augustinian notions of bondage (based on Augustine's doctrine of original sin). Grotius is also recognized for dissociating natural law from theology and elevating its authority above the will of rulers and God. In the process, Grotius endowed the law with a self-evident and independent stature which served to limit human authority and to mould and regulate a rational and purposeful human order.<sup>232</sup> Consequently, the question of slavery boiled down to the legality of its practice. In other words, did the transcendental quality of the law, arrived at by deducing appropriate human behaviour via reasoned analysis, allow for the enslavement of one human being by another?

Here, Grotius falls squarely within the category of thinkers that perceived slavery as compatible with natural justice; his conviction rested on the millennia long and near universal slavery practices attributable to various nations. Whether this practice concurred with natural law was irrelevant. The determinative factor was that the practice of slavery was supported (historically and in the present) by various authorities and it was endorsed by longstanding custom. On the basis of these factors, the practice could neither be inherently unjust nor repugnant to natural reason.<sup>233</sup> Therefore, even if Grotius divorced the human capacity to reason from divine revelation and elevated human will from the constraining Augustinian notions of bondage (based on the doctrine of original sin), there is significant commonality between the positions held by the two men. Grotius, like Augustine, saw slavery as a fundamental component of a system of authority and discipline manifest within a rational

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., pp. 114-115.



order.<sup>234</sup> The difference between the two was in the central concepts each used to arrive at their similar positions (divine revelation and original sin for Augustine versus natural reason for Grotius). Hence Davis' affirmation that Grotius' "intimate knowledge of classical authorities could be used to create a secular philosophy of law and constitutional power; but it could also be turned to a secular defence of slavery at a time when the prosperity of Holland was closely linked with the African trade."<sup>235</sup>

As opposed to Grotius, whose positions on slavery sprung from classical and Christian treatments of the matter, Thomas Hobbes' focus on the logic of power rendered both the classical and Christian justifications for slavery unnecessary and irrelevant. With his reduction of all social relations to fear and self-interest, essential concepts – like merit, wisdom, natural inferiority, sin – used in complex explanations and justifications for slavery's existence were swept away.<sup>236</sup> These elements were non-factors in conditions where the authority used to restrain man's aggressive individualism was essentially based on brute force. Slavery was for Hobbes – as it was for Augustine, Aquinas and Grotius – part and parcel of a larger system of order based on subordination and authority. The major difference between Hobbes and the other theorists however, was that Hobbes did not see a disparity between man's worldly state versus an idealized state of freedom in nature (secular or religious).

For Hobbes, the relationship between master and slave was a form of compact (akin to his larger social compact); the slave exchanged obedience to a master to secure the removal of his (literal) physical bonds (chains). Davis observes that "Hobbes stated quite explicitly that the only difference between the free subject and the "servant" was that one

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<sup>234</sup> Davis traces the legacy of associating various evils, including slavery, as necessary components of a properly functioning whole to Plato's cosmic principle of order, see *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

served the city and the other served a fellow subject. Hence the “servant” had no cause to complain of oppression or lack of liberty, when he was only kept from hurting himself and was provided with sustenance in exchange for being governed.”<sup>237</sup> It seems rather straightforward that Hobbes would not intuitively be associated with antislavery sentiment. However – and ironically – his discarding and replacement of traditional elements used to justify slavery (like merit, wisdom, natural inferiority and sin) with a focus on power undermined classical and Christian justifications for bondage. An attack on absolutism based on his work could easily herald an attendant attack on slavery. However, rather than this opening, it was the justifying elements of his views on servitude that were apprehended instead.<sup>238</sup>

As opposed to Hobbes, John Locke is of course characterized as one of the greatest defenders of the inalienable rights of man. Locke sought to free man from authority based on revelation, precedent or brute force. Central pillars of his philosophy rested on the notions that no man could sell himself to another and every man should have a right to his own person and labour.<sup>239</sup> Indeed, in his *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke affirms that “Slavery is so vile and miserable an Estate of Man, and so directly opposite to the generous Temper and Courage of our nation; that ‘tis hardly to be conceived, that an *Englishman*, much less a *Gentleman*, should plead for ‘t.”<sup>240</sup> Yet Locke, as Lord Ashley’s secretary in 1669, voiced no objections when he transcribed the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* which gave absolute power and authority to masters over their slaves. Later, Locke even invested in the Royal Africa Company (a slaving enterprise).<sup>241</sup> At the end of the day, slavery was a justifiable institution for Locke. Regarding bondage, the seeming contradictions in his

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> A good example of this is Samuel von Pufendorf; Pufendorf used Hobbes’ positions to voice his sentiments that he had no objections to slavery being revived in Europe. See Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>240</sup> John Locke and Peter Laslett, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 141.

<sup>241</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, p. 118.

philosophy (and actions) were reconciled by Locke's placement of slavery outside the purview of the social contract that was meant to underwrite and protect men's inalienable rights.

The same logic which justified the preservation of natural rights in Locke's theory of the social contract also – and ironically – justified the institution of slavery. The key was that the origins of slavery, akin to liberty and property, were exogenous to the social contract. For Locke, when one surrendered their life, they could not complain if their ultimate punishment (death) was deferred in favour of being enslaved. The enslaved always had recourse to resist their masters and hasten the original fate they deserved at the forfeiture of their lives. This forfeiture was for Locke a wilful act that served to replace original sin as a pillar for justifying the fate merited and incurred by the slave. Therefore, Locke argued that “This is the perfect condition of *Slavery* which is nothing else, but the *state of War continued, between a lawful Conqueror, and a Captive*.”<sup>242</sup> Given these arguments, the obligations of the social compact did not apply to slavery. Bondage was a case of exogenous war transferred into society in which the state had no jurisdiction.<sup>243</sup>

Although this section provides a limited and selective review, it is generally consistent with, and reflective of, the positions elucidated in more exhaustive reviews.<sup>244</sup> Whether on the basis of a religious or secular focus, all of the thinkers (spanning a period of two millennia) covered in this section (with the exception of Bodin) accepted and justified slavery. The practice remained legitimate well into the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. To adopt Fogel's words, slavery was (and remained) “part of the natural scheme of things.”<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Locke and Laslett, *Two Treatises of Government*., p. 284.

<sup>243</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 120.

<sup>244</sup> See Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810*., Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823*., ———, *Slavery and Human Progress*., ———, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. and Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*.

<sup>245</sup> Robert Fogel quoted in Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*., p. 9.

However, the most interesting aspect here is not simply the fact that these eminent minds, spanning two millennia, accepted and justified slavery on the basis of varying thought frameworks and foci within their respective and differing times and environments. What is more significant for this thesis is the fact that their respective rationalizations contained (save for Aristotle) elements that could have served as foundations for antislavery sentiments. However, this potential consistently remained untapped, and up to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the legitimacy of the practice of slavery remained relatively impermeable. Due to its entrenched nature, the institution exhibited a remarkable capacity to adapt and resist change. Roger Anstey therefore concludes that “...as the eighteenth century opened there was nothing in the work of the philosophical luminaries of the previous century to suggest other than continued acceptance of slavery.”<sup>246</sup>

This adaptability concurs well with the notion that the inertial strength acquired by this longstanding practice (on the basis of background knowledge) successfully conditioned cognitive frames to ensure the continuity of the institution. This is reflected in how the internal and sometimes contradictory tensions that slavery generated within the logics of many of the seminal thinkers reviewed here were cleverly reconciled and accommodated. Quaker and Evangelical inspired orientations provided foundations upon which antislavery sentiments could be generated and coherently articulated. This was not, in and of itself, novel. The difference however between Quaker and Evangelical positions was that in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century world, unlike other (previous and contemporary) threads of thought that may have provided foundations for antislavery sentiment, Quakers and Evangelicals succeeded in apprehending openings to bring about (practical) change. The elaboration of these antislavery sentiments would provide a sound footing upon which the organization of an effective and concerted interdenominational effort to abolish slavery could be based – and propagated. In

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<sup>246</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 93.

the next chapter we will review some key ideas and practices which shaped Quaker and Evangelical dispositions; ideas and practices which were pivotal in heralding significant and impending changes regarding the legitimacy (and practice) of slavery.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Practices, Dispositions and Rupture: the 1807 British Slave Trade Ban**

Although there was little indication that slavery was under any form of threat at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as Anstey has observed,

...the content of received wisdom had so altered by the 1780s that educated men and the political nation, provided they had no direct interest in the slave system, would be likely to regard slavery and the slave trade as morally condemned, as no longer philosophically defensible.<sup>247</sup>

The shift is evident in the works of notables like Abbé Raynal, John Wesley, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Dr. Samuel Johnson (among others).<sup>248</sup> Yet, Anstey continues his observation by stating that educated men and the political nation

“...might even be prepared to support abolition, provided that they had no direct interest in the slave system, provided they could be assured that the national interest would not thereby be significantly harmed, and to the extent that anything so novel as a positive measure of institutional reform could command support.”<sup>249</sup>

The multiple conditionalities attached to the possible acceptance of abolition indicate that although Enlightenment ideas pertaining to slavery were noteworthy and helped create an environment propitious for change, their impact on actual policy (or contribution to practical change) was relatively limited.<sup>250</sup> Men from varied philosophical positions and backgrounds like Francis Hutcheson, baron de Montesquieu, Edmund Burke and Adam Smith (among others) all contributed to creating an atmosphere more favourable for change.<sup>251</sup> However, as far as apprehending these openings and initiating and actualizing change,

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96. Davis characterizes this as a “remarkable shift in moral consciousness.” Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 41.

<sup>248</sup> Both Anstey and Davis provide analyses about the contributions of some of the notable figures listed above. See Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, chapter 4 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, chapters 11-15.

<sup>249</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 96.

<sup>250</sup> Defence of the institution had shifted to its economic and strategic necessity. Brown, “Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, p. 287.

<sup>251</sup> Both Anstey and Davis review the contributions of some of the notable figures (and others) listed above. See Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, chapter 4 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, chapters 11-15.

A more dramatic role was the achievement of the two religious groups in the abolition movement, Quakers and Evangelicals. Though influenced by the currents of thought of their age, their inspiration was essentially religious...it produced a new, four-square, theologically based condemnation of slavery and a dynamic of faith and action which largely created and sustained the abolition campaign.<sup>252</sup>

The current chapter will review how Quakers and Evangelicals interpreted and applied (internalized) the general theological trends of the era in their quotidian life. This will facilitate our understanding of how practices based on these theological interpretations and applications shaped these non-conformist groups' antislavery positions. This conditioning disposed Quakers and Evangelicals to bring their antislavery arguments and deliberations into the political fray. The final section of the chapter will illustrate how these practice based/shaped processes translated into the political dynamics that culminated in the banning of the British slave trade in 1807 – a monumental shift by the world's premier slaving nation of the day.

### General Theological Trends

For the purposes of explaining the development of antislavery sentiment and abolitionism, Anstey has identified three key concepts that were of common concern to philosophers and theologians of the age: liberty, benevolence and happiness.<sup>253</sup> How these concepts were appropriated and integrated by theologians was conditioned by a couple of important developments during the period. The developments in question paved the way for an impetus and inclination to reform. The first of these advances is the heightened premium that was put on the traditional idea of God's presence in the world through his Providence (His activities in the world). A relatively novel theological idea of progress was cast through this doctrine of Providence, which was elaborated through the concept of progressive

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<sup>252</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 96.

<sup>253</sup> See *Ibid.*, chapter 4.



revelation; the notion that God revealed truth (and Himself) in increments through time rather than as a whole in a moment.<sup>254</sup> This idea inherently implied a growing progressive state in which human beings, and by consequence the human condition, were gradually improving through the bias of God.<sup>255</sup>

The emergent doctrine of Providence was accompanied by, and supplemented with, a reconceptualization of the concept of benevolence and a probe of how benevolence related to religious life and practice.<sup>256</sup> The Christian basis of benevolence was of course not new; it sprung from the New Testament's injunction to love one's neighbour. But revulsion to Calvinism's idea of man's utter depravity, coupled with Hobbes' objectionable conclusion that man's passions could not be tempered with anything less than absolute government gave renewed breadth to a recasting of the concept of man's benevolence.<sup>257</sup> The emphasis shifted from man's sinful nature to his innate responsibility towards, and love for, his fellow human beings. The claim was that this was evident through man's natural inclination for pity and compassion. The logic was that despite our Fallen state, these inclinations were given to us by our Creator to incite us to perform our duties towards others (mainly to help). This concurred well with progressive revelation's notion of a steady unfolding of the improvement of man's condition. Basically, our Creator imbued us with a characteristic that was dominant in His own being.<sup>258</sup> Through the granting of benevolent proclivities, He was helping his creatures overcome the effects of the Fall.<sup>259</sup>

In essence, progressive revelation meant a steady and continuous process through which God's plan for man was incrementally revealed to his subjects. This inherently implied

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., pp. 130-131.

<sup>255</sup> See Ibid., chapter 5 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 362.

<sup>256</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 348.

<sup>257</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 127 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 349.

<sup>258</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 367.

<sup>259</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 131 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, pp. 335-337.

– and imposed a premium on – the ability to discern right from wrong (morality) in accordance with these revelations. Punishments and rewards received in the worldly realm were God’s way of commending or condemning human behaviour.<sup>260</sup> In other words, receiving reprimands or rewards was one way for men to assess whether they were on the correct path (behaving in accordance with God’s teachings and revelations). In turn, this intrinsically implied that adjustment (change) was sometimes necessary. Ultimately, this meant that once a given conduct was considered wrong (evil), in order to avoid wreaking providential sanctions, men needed to be persuaded to abstain from the immoral behaviours in question.<sup>261</sup> In this sense, benevolence was a corrective measure to right wrongs and overcome man’s sinful nature. The cumulative effects of these ideas planted the seed for the notion that man, through Providence, was striving – and should strive – towards perfection.

These dictums were not only applicable to individuals, whose judgement would also extend into the afterlife. Given that collectivities (nations) had no otherworldly continuation, the justice of Providence for them would have to be meted out in the earthly realm.<sup>262</sup> As we shall later see, many Quaker and Evangelical abolitionists conceived of wars and natural calamities as precisely the dispensation of such providential justice meted out for their participation in the sin of the slave trade and slavery. In essence, Providence (and progressive revelation) and benevolence were the theological rebuttal to some of the Enlightenment’s central claims. As Anstey observes “...here was a conception of progress as the manifestation of a great providential design and as such different from the belief in progress as originating exclusively in the Enlightenment’s modest faith in what would flow from the application of scientific reason to human problems.”<sup>263</sup> Given philosophy’s rarefied quality in comparison to religion’s reach (still very significant in peoples’ everyday lives in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 127.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p. 133 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 363.

centuries), the theological renditions of progress and benevolence made quicker and more expansive inroads.<sup>264</sup>

Ultimately, what is important to retain for the purposes of this thesis is that these overarching theological currents, with their attendant notions of progress (and potential for human perfectibility) paved the way for the possibility of reforming human institutions. It is important to note however that these same theological currents had nothing novel to offer regarding the legitimacy of slavery. Their primary importance lay in their contributions to disposing people to be amenable to the impetus of reform.<sup>265</sup> The active condemnation of slavery as a morally reprehensible practice that would place it within this novel framework of Providence and benevolence – and consequently activate the abolitionist struggle – was dependent on how Quakers and Evangelicals apprehended the messages contained in these overarching theological trends. We now turn to this matter.

### Quaker Dispositions

As we have seen, in the Christian theological tradition, slavery was intimately intertwined with sin. Consequently, if conceptualizations of sin were to evolve, attitudes towards slavery could evolve as well.<sup>266</sup> The previous section reviewed how in novel theological precepts, God's providential design was meant, through benevolence and progressive revelation, to help man overcome his Fallen state. The idea that man was meant to – and should – strive for perfection in the earthly realm was inherent in this conceptualization. Over time, the Church had managed to temper the idea of earthly perfectibility by apprehending notions like the temporal millennialist idea that the Second Coming of Christ would deliver man from his bondage to sin and lead to a Kingdom of God

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<sup>264</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 139 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 384.

<sup>265</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 140

<sup>266</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 292.

on earth (a paradise on earth). In an effort to reconcile with the imperfections – and imperfectability – of the material realm, scriptural prophecies were instead conceptualized as allegories. The Second Coming and its attendant Kingdom of God were portrayed as spiritual events in individuals' souls.<sup>267</sup>

During and after the Reformation however, nascent sectarian and perfectionist traditions seized on contemporaneous developments to exploit the tensions created by the egalitarianism inherent within Christianity to challenge the established church and its scriptural interpretations (consequentially challenging established social orders). As we have seen earlier in Chapter Two, theologians had worked hard to cleverly reconcile some of these tensions. As Davis observes “By picturing God as a revolutionary, transforming force, rather than a fixed Good to which man aspires, some of the sectarians undermined the ideology which rationalized the existing social order as a necessary compromise with sin.”<sup>268</sup> Progressive revelation melded well with a reconceptualization of time which recast history as a creative process leading steadily to perfection. The reassessments of Providence (progressive revelation) and benevolence, with their attendant notions about morality, time and perfection, made for a potent combination to dispose individuals to desire and seek change. In general, this translated into a belief in man's will and the Christian power of love (benevolence). For radical sectarians who did not have faith in gradual transformation, compromise and rationalization were part of the problem. They were determined to wage an unrelenting battle against the forces of darkness. The wellspring of fundamental values to inspire and prosecute this battle was pooled from internal impulse rather than external authority. As we shall see, Quaker beliefs and practices mirrored some of these precepts – and were clearly manifest in Quakers' unremitting battle against the slave trade and slavery.

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p. 294. Or in Davis words “the traditional Christian distinction between inner and outer states had become blurred.” p. 342.

Within the backdrop of upheaval, sectarians emphasized the notion that salvation and communion with God did not necessitate the intermediaries of doctrines, conventions and the church. Religion was about a sacred and personal connection to God that led to spiritual rebirth. Rebirth, in turn, led sectarians to existential questions about whether one had to engage – often violently – with the existing social order to reform it or to retreat instead from sinful society with other likeminded individuals. Those who engaged risked martyrdom, while those who withdrew risked extinction.<sup>269</sup> One sect that emerged during the civil wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and managed to survive this predicament was the Quakers. Davis attributes the very survival of the sect to its remarkable ability to reconcile “their radical impulse to perfection” and “the absolute law of love” with “the realities of life.”<sup>270</sup>

For Quakers, perfection was to be sought through self-purification. In order to achieve a sinless state, one had to be united with God to the extent that the self was effaced into the divine.<sup>271</sup> This contemplation of God facilitated the withdrawal of the mind from the taints of worldliness. Internal and silent meditation, referred to as the Inner Light in Quaker theology, would lead to a direct personal experience of God. In this state of meditation, one could hear God’s voice and seek guidance that would allow him/her to express his/her conscience, faith and beliefs. Put differently, the concept of Inner Light denotes the presence of God in man; once the soul was entirely committed and submissive to the divine in this fashion, God could then direct the soul (this could be considered the Quaker rendition of the doctrine of providence through progressive revelation). This process of spiritual rebirth required selflessness and love. And although this form of quietism denotes inaction, passivity and withdrawal, the internal transformations of the Quaker soul were manifest in the external world. Expressing their conscience through personal testimony was a cornerstone of Quaker

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., p. 300 and ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 44.

<sup>271</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*

belief and theology. Among other things, “Quaker converts demonstrated their spiritual liberty by refusing to pay tithes, to take oaths before magistrates, or to bow or doff their hats to superiors.”<sup>272</sup> The Inner Light and absolute law of love also led to an uncompromising commitment to opposing violence as a means to bring about societal change – leading to categorical refusals to participate in, or provide support for, military endeavours.

Charity (benevolence) was a way to escape the stain of sin and worldliness while harnessing the power of one’s Inner Light. Reliance on the concept of Inner Light to discern right from wrong (moral evils) also enabled Quakers to disregard law and precedent as appropriate barometers for morality. However, a number of developments made it challenging to successfully balance sacrosanct principles with quotidian life. This led the minority sect to engage in periodic introspection, which subsequently raised doubts about the sect’s purity.<sup>273</sup> One of the developments in question was the impressive economic successes of Quakers. Barred from the professions and governmental positions in England, Quakers quickly acquired a keen commercial acumen and became very accomplished businessmen.<sup>274</sup> This development led to tensions with the central Quaker tenets of self-purification through spiritual rebirth and personal testimony – processes that necessitated disassociating oneself from worldly pursuits and luxuries. Wealth was perceived as a potential sign of decay associated with the moral evils of the material world. As Quakers’ comforts increased, the guilt and decay associated with the accumulation of wealth led to a fear of divine judgement (retributive justice). In order to achieve redemption, the goal of cleansing the sect of its impurity was (re)emphasized. Renewed zeal to prevent the dimming of the Inner Light led to

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>274</sup> The Barclays and Lloyds established two of the world’s biggest and most successful banks. Cadbury and Rowntree are amongst the most recognizable names in the confectionary world. Abraham Darby was an innovator and magnate in the iron industry while Edward Pease was the founder of the first passenger carrying railway in Britain. Numerous other examples can be cited. Quakers became dominant across a number of sectors including banking, shipping, mining, insurance and the manufacture of porcelain, instruments, drugs and China. ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, pp. 233 and 237.

increased charitable activity to escape the stain of sin and worldliness. The channelling of generous portions of prosperity toward pious activities, along with strict ethics of responsibility and thrift, would serve to offset the potentially darker side of wealth accumulation. However, this does not explain why, out of the many moral ills that Quakers targeted to renounce and combat in order to purify themselves, slavery became such a focal point.

Although Quakers condemned war, they still recognized the significance of sin and respected the authority of government and the sanctity of private property.<sup>275</sup> However, not unlike predecessor religious traditions, early Quakers did not perceive slavery as being particularly problematic.<sup>276</sup> This seeming contradiction is illustrative of some of the tensions and challenges generated in attempting to reconcile “the realities of life” with the “law of absolute love” and a “radical impulse towards perfection.”<sup>277</sup> After all, governments engaged in war and a significant portion of bondsmen were obtained via war or violent means; Quakers’ opposed war and violent initiatives for societal change, and slavery undoubtedly contravened the law of absolute love.<sup>278</sup> The Quaker change of course on slavery was connected to the fact that the expansion of Quakerism coincided with the expansion and intensification of colonial activities in the Americas.<sup>279</sup> The realization that Quaker fortunes were inextricably – directly or indirectly – linked to, and fuelled by, an activity (the slave trade and slavery) that contributed significantly to the prosperity of the British Empire led to pangs of conscience.<sup>280</sup> The general crisis in faith brought about by the potential decay associated with the accumulation of wealth led Quakers to a deeper examination of the nature and impact of the economic activities that members of the sect engaged in.

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<sup>275</sup> ———, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 303.

<sup>276</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 202 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 44.

<sup>277</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 300.

<sup>278</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 203.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>280</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 303.

Given that slavery was a preeminent and perennial example of selfishness, greed and man's brutality towards his fellow beings, bondage exemplified many of the moral evils that characterized the external order that sectarians rebelled against. Members' involvement in and contributions to (direct or indirect) the perpetuation of slavery became a signpost of Quakerism's own spiritual bondage.<sup>281</sup> These conducts were dissonant with the absolute law of love and the principled opposition to violence; consequently, they were an impediment to redemption and invited the prospect of divine judgement. Therefore, personal testimony against the morally reprehensible practices of the slave trade and slavery became a test and badge by which the religious purity of Quakerism could be (re)established and demonstrated. The persecution and marginalization of the sect may have also contributed to Quaker temperaments for compassion towards other marginalized groups (like slaves). Finally, general charitable work and pious activity, including the dissemination of these antislavery sentiments outside the introverted circle of its own membership, were also a means used to counteract the circumscribed influence (due to its marginalization) of the sect in society.<sup>282</sup>

It is important to note that the political struggle that ensued after the Quakers' introduction of these practice/dispositionally shaped reflections, arguments and deliberations into the larger societal arena was facilitated and buttressed by the transposition (and adaptation) into the political field of various established Quaker practices. To ensure the survival and preserve the unity of a persecuted and marginalized minority sect that became aware of its own peculiarity and relative isolation, Quakers' developed impressive networks (domestic and transnational) facilitating correspondence, information sharing and

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>282</sup> Both Davis and Anstey (and others) cites the events surrounding the Seven Years War as having a catalyzing effect on Quakers' expanded involvement in charitable matters outside their introverted circles. After refusing to fight in the war or support it by paying taxes, the general persecution that Quakers suffered led Friends who held positions in the Pennsylvanian colonial government to a difficult choice between morality and politics. Rather than compromise, they chose to withdraw from government. Therefore, Friends invested more energy in pious activities as a way to offset their influence deficit resulting from these events. Their persecution also heightened their sensitivity towards other marginalized groups. Ibid., pp. 331-332, Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, pp. 210-213 and Brown, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 284.



dissemination and mutual aid. To avoid fractures, they developed distinctive decision-making mechanisms based on consensus-building.<sup>283</sup> And, in struggling against discriminatory laws, the sect had long familiarized itself with lobbying efforts and activities. These networks and the commercial successes of Quakers were mutually reinforcing. As we shall see in the next sections and chapters, the Quaker know-how associated with practices of networking, lobbying, marketing and information gathering and dissemination were harnessed and put to the service of building antislavery sentiment.<sup>284</sup> The successful take-up of these sentiments were crucial in building up the wider interdenominational abolitionist movement<sup>285</sup> that fought for the legal prohibition of British slave trading and slavery, and successfully co-opted the British authorities to internationalize these domestic bans.<sup>286</sup>

However, for all the grist that unremitting Quaker convictions, know-how and wealth provided in developing and disseminating antislavery sentiment, tensions in the Quaker belief system somewhat restrained the ability of the sect to fully apprehend, transform and concretize these sentiments into legislative reforms.<sup>287</sup> Ultimately, the Quaker position on slavery was the product of an intra-sect dialogue and was primarily animated by an overarching concern about purifying the sect (rather than a fundamental and primary concern for slaves' freedom).<sup>288</sup> The call to change the world on the basis of the Inner Light was tempered by the sect's heavy penchant for quietism. Consequently, Quakers had a hard time shaking off their somewhat guarded, introverted and detached mind frames. The sect's marginalization in society and its exclusion from the corridors of power were additional

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<sup>283</sup> See Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, pp. 200-201. and David, "Transnational Advocacy in the Eighteenth Century: Transatlantic Activism and the Anti-Slavery Movement.", Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, pp. 313-315.

<sup>284</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 215.

<sup>285</sup> A movement in which non-conformists were predominant. Walvin, "The Rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition, 1787-1832.", pp. 150-151.

<sup>286</sup> Anstey, "The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.", p. 36.

<sup>287</sup> ———, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 202.

<sup>288</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, p. 294.

constraining factors.<sup>289</sup> However, as Anstey has observed, Evangelicals' powerful faith-based dynamic for action in the world "was released by the abolitionist enthusiasm of Quakers."<sup>290</sup> Overlapping religious beliefs facilitated cooperation between the two groups and eventually led to a wider interdenominational antislavery movement.<sup>291</sup> Before moving on to exploring the political dynamics that led to the abolition of the British slave trade on the basis of the Quaker and Evangelical practice conditioned arguments imported into the political fray, we will review key notions and practices that disposed Evangelicals to energetically and tenaciously supplement and further Quaker commitments to the antislavery cause.

### Evangelical Dispositions

Like Quakers, Evangelicals were inspired by the general theological trends of their era. Consequently, the doctrine of Providence was a central constitutive element of the Evangelical mind. The idea that God's hand was clearly discernible in events transpiring in the earthly realm was firmly entrenched.<sup>292</sup> Similar to the Quakers, notions of sin form an important basis to understanding what disposed Evangelicals to prosecuting a dogged and uncompromising battle against slavery. There came a moment in every Evangelical's life when a struggle to recognize and come to grips with their own sinful natures and activities arose. This was a difficult and agonizing spiritual struggle from which evangelicals were liberated through the gift of grace. In order to redeem themselves and atone for past transgressions, this spiritual rebirth required a life of devotion to God. The devotional life was the road to deliverance.<sup>293</sup> Inspired by the general doctrine of providence, the meaning and direction of this devotional life were delineated by the development of the Evangelical notion of particular providence. God's activities in the world were not limited to macro-level

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<sup>289</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 208.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., pp. 160-161.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., p. 172 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, pp. 386-387.

developments; they were also discernible in and through individual human beings and their respective activities. This meant that individuals were called (by God) to particular tasks in life (this is somewhat comparable to the Quaker notion of Inner Light providing divine guidance). Once particular providence directed – through cues and various life events – a person towards particular tasks, the conviction and logic informing the idea of the devotional life meant that the tasks at hand were to be pursued unrelentingly in the face of any and all adversity.<sup>294</sup> Basically, it was every person's duty to direct all available resources in their command towards the execution of the tasks associated with their calling. Once again, this naturally begs the question of why slavery. What was it about slavery that made its abolition so focal to Evangelicals?

Although scriptural examples were used by Evangelicals as illustrations of God's disdain for slavery, it was also scriptural references that well educated men had used from antiquity onwards to legitimize bondage. However, Evangelical renditions of these holy texts were markedly different. The point of reference for Evangelical interpretations was rooted in redemption, which was exemplified by the atoning work of Christ.<sup>295</sup> God's redemptive purpose was placed within the context of liberation from both spiritual and physical slavery.<sup>296</sup> The deliverance of the Israelites (the Chosen People) from bondage in Egypt, followed by their later chastisement – attributed to the breaching “of their promise to liberate their captive servants and handmaidens” – were used as examples to support these claims.<sup>297</sup> Granville Sharp, one of the earliest (and famed) English campaigners for abolition went as far as inferring that the Babylonian captivity was an extension of this chastisement.<sup>298</sup> It is important to note here the emphasis that is placed – on the basis of the Christian law of love –

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<sup>294</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, pp. 173-175.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., pp. 186-187.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

on God's merciful nature towards the Chosen People during their time of captivity in Egypt, and a similar compassion that is manifest towards the survivors of the Babylonian tragedy.<sup>299</sup> For Evangelicals, the objective was to mirror and apply these scriptural illustrations of the law of love in their daily lives; herein lay the hopes of being saved through redeeming deeds (benevolence). In addition however, applying the law of love had special significance in relation to slavery.

In contrast to many previous religious interpretations justifying slavery, Evangelicals effaced the dichotomy between spiritual and physical bondage. As was evidenced by scriptural examples, deliverance from bondage was both spiritual and physical. Physical slavery was the analogue to spiritual slavery, which logically implied that emancipation and freedom from physical bondage were analogous to spiritual redemption and liberty.<sup>300</sup> This notion had a firm footing in the Evangelical mind as it mirrored the introspective struggle which led Evangelicals to the spiritual rebirth that liberated them from their bondage to sin and, in turn, led them to the devotional life. This reflected scripture. Scripture had shown that God chose to reveal Himself to man through a chosen people that He had liberated from physical slavery; a chosen people who had voluntarily accepted a higher form of service to God.<sup>301</sup> The Evangelical dynamic for action to change the world was contingent on the externalization of this liberation from spiritual bondage. The close association of this spiritual liberation with freedom from physical bondage (backed by scriptural examples) imbued slavery with the attributes of being a supreme sin that required a response in kind.<sup>302</sup> The primacy of the sin of slavery also meant that its continuance begot the providential judgement it invited. All kinds of calamities – from reductions of political and economic fortunes to natural disasters – were attributed to the perpetuation of this pre-eminent sin. Therefore,

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., pp. 188-189.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>301</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., pp. 64-65.

<sup>302</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810*., pp. 182-183.

political expediency required righteousness in order to avoid both personal and collective providential justice.<sup>303</sup>

Ultimately, through a religious appropriation, Evangelicals gave some of the key precepts of their age (benevolence, liberty and happiness) profound dimensions.<sup>304</sup> Through concepts such as sin, atonement, redemption, salvation, particular providence and the law of love, dedication to God became a reasoned system of devotion on the basis of an act of faith – as opposed to a reorientation towards scientific reason.<sup>305</sup> This system of devotion was consonant with the overarching theological trends of the era which were reviewed earlier. Namely, that providence (operating through progressive revelation) and the renewed emphasis placed on benevolence – with their attending reconceptualizations of time and history – served as a boon for progress and most importantly, an inclination to reform.

The duty-bound externalization of their personal spiritual overcoming differentiated Evangelicals from Quakers. The tension within Quakerism between the call to change the world on the basis of the Inner Light and the sect's heavy penchant for quietism and personal testimony did not have a counterpart in Evangelicalism. To the contrary, as opposed to the relatively guarded, introverted and detached mind frame of Quakers, Evangelicalism actively mandated its adherents with a clear responsibility to engage the world in order to change it.<sup>306</sup> However, it cannot be emphasized enough that for slavery related matters, Evangelicals' powerful faith-based dynamic for action in the world "was released by the abolitionist enthusiasm of Quakers."<sup>307</sup> In other words, it was the Quakers' development, zeal for, and dissemination of a coherent antislavery position that put abolitionism on Evangelicals' radars. On the other hand, Evangelicals had a great deal to offer to bridge and overcome the

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid., pp. 193-198.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., p. 168 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. 363.

<sup>306</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823*., pp. 46-47.

<sup>307</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810*., p. 200.

obstacles Quakers faced in actualizing their aspirations for abolition. Most importantly, Evangelicals were not marginalized in society and were not excluded from the corridors of power. Ultimately, the commonalities in the dispositions of the two groups led to a synergetic cooperation in which the weaknesses of each group was complemented and overcome by the strengths of the other.<sup>308</sup> The Quakers provided their networking, lobbying, marketing and information gathering and dissemination expertise while the Evangelicals infused the cause with legitimacy, authority and their dynamic for action to change the world.

On the basis of the dispositional shaping of both groups and the common grounds upon which their cooperation flourished, Quakers and Evangelicals led an incredibly persistent battle in the political realm. It was their unrelenting ethic that led to a larger interdenominational movement that culminated in the British legislative bans on the slave trade and slavery. It was also their continued diligence that persuaded and co-opted the British authorities to externalize and persist in the battle against slavery in the international arena. Therefore, the inspiration and involvement of Quakers and Evangelicals were instrumental in Britain's critical contributions to the eventual global abolition of slavery.<sup>309</sup>

With the review of the practices that conditioned and shaped the dispositions of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. Quaker and Evangelical minds complete, the next section will illustrate how arguments and actions conditioned by this shaping translated into the political dynamics which resulted in the first important marker in the history of the British antislavery movement; the 1807 British ban on slave trading. Or, as it relates back to the first half of the theoretical contributions of this thesis, to demonstrate how an approach focused on the shaping functions of practices (on dispositions) could provide additional insights in interpreting the events that culminated in the British domestic ban on slave trading.

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>309</sup> Brown, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 288.

The Long and Winding Road to the 1807 Ban

Before the war of American Independence the possibility of abolishing Britain's Atlantic slave trade had never been raised in parliament. No pressure group from without had urged its consideration. No member had moved its investigation. By the end of the French wars three decades later, parliament had shut down Britain's trade. Its government had begun a process of internationalizing abolition.<sup>310</sup>

As highlighted by Seymour Drescher in the above passage, immediately following the banning of the trade for its nationals in 1807 and the outlawing of slavery in its empire in 1833<sup>311</sup>, Britain pressed for the internationalization of these respective prohibitions.<sup>312</sup> In order to grasp how Quaker and Evangelical individuals and groups managed to cultivate a relatively generalized antislavery sentiment that facilitated the formation of a larger interdenominational movement that persuaded the British authorities to externalize the antislavery battle, it is crucial to begin with an account of how the British authorities first arrived at their own domestic ban(s). In other words, in order to understand why and how the British authorities fervently persecuted the international battle that precipitated the eventual global abolition of the slave trade and slavery, it is essential to ascertain how Quakers and Evangelicals (on the basis of their dispositional shaping reviewed in the previous chapter) succeeded in persuading the government of the world's premier slaving nation of the day to reverse course on its positions regarding slavery.

Musings about the appropriateness of the transatlantic slave trade started gathering momentum in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>313</sup> Before then, in scrutinizing the period of 1713-1783,

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<sup>310</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 42.

<sup>311</sup> With the notable exception of India.

<sup>312</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 41.

<sup>313</sup> Reflected, for example, in the writings of such notables as Abbé Raynal, John Wesley, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Francis Hutcheson, baron de Montesquieu, Edmund Burke and Adam Smith. Both Anstey and Davis provide analyses about the contributions of some of the notable figures listed above. See Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, chapter 4 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, chapters 11-15. David, "Transnational Advocacy in the Eighteenth Century:

Christopher Brown has observed that “For most of the British nation, as well as for most members of parliament, the African slave trade was at once fundamental and almost entirely invisible.”<sup>314</sup> Or, as James Walvin has affirmed, “the slaves were, in general, out of sight and out of mind; labouring helots on the far side of the Atlantic whose conditions scarcely ruffled the conscience of the people who benefited most from their efforts – British consumers.”<sup>315</sup> On the basis of events which conditioned and precipitated their intra-sect dialogue covered earlier in this chapter, a group that is particularly responsible for both initiating and persisting in putting the slavery issue on the agenda was the Society of Friends – more commonly known as the Quakers. Thomas Clarkson traces the earliest English Quaker resolution regarding the slave trade to 1727.<sup>316</sup> As of the 1760s, Quaker resolutions “expressive of their abhorrence of the traffic” had become routine.<sup>317</sup> As Huw David has observed, Quakers, “Through their literature, their network of personal contacts...were uniquely influential. They galvanized British anti-slavery activism and then broadened this Quaker-led network into a wider, interdenominational campaign.”<sup>318</sup>

As Quaker organization around the slavery question was burgeoning in the empire, on the British side of the Atlantic, one of the first Evangelicals of note to take up the antislavery mantle was a civil servant named Granville Sharp. Sharp was the son of an Anglican archdeacon. He first gained widespread notoriety as a result of the 1772 Somerset case. It was

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Transatlantic Activism and the Anti-Slavery Movement.”, p. 369., and Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., p. 40.

<sup>314</sup> Christopher L. Brown, “The British Government and the Slave Trade: Early Parliamentary Enquiries, 1713-1783,” in *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, ed. Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007)., p. 28., or Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*., p. 3.

<sup>315</sup> James Walvin, “Foreword” in J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995)., p. V.

<sup>316</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament*, vol. I (London: Bibliobazaar (print on demand), 2008 (original 1808))., p. 63.

<sup>317</sup> James Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction* (London: Cass, 1968)., p. 68.

<sup>318</sup> David, “Transnational Advocacy in the Eighteenth Century: Transatlantic Activism and the Anti-Slavery Movement.”, p. 370.



common practice for slave-owners to come to England from the colonies with their slaves, and upon setting sail to return, taking these bondsmen back with them. In 1771, while in England, a slave named James Somerset escaped from his master. He was recaptured and forced to board a ship bound for the colony of Jamaica. Sharp intervened and took the case to court. In 1772, the judge in the case ruled that once a slave set foot in England he was free and could not be taken back as a slave unless he freely consented to it.<sup>319</sup> The case garnered a great deal of attention from the press. On the heels of the decision, even after individually appealing to Prime Minister (PM) North and Lord Dartmouth (Secretary of State for the Colonies), Sharp's call for the government to abolish both the trade and slavery was ignored.<sup>320</sup> Four years later, in 1776, the issue was raised for the first time in Parliament. David Hartley, member for Hull, moved for a resolution in the House of Commons "that the slave trade was contrary to the laws of God and the rights of man."<sup>321</sup> The motion got scant attention and was dropped.

As early as 1783, British Quakers had formed two committees to try and effect the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>322</sup> In that year, they submitted the first public petition to parliament about the slave trade; PM North praised their concern but brushed them off by emphasizing the necessity of the trade.<sup>323</sup> Even after a 1784 audience with the new ministry of William Pitt, solicitation of support from elites, subsidization of notices placed in the London and regional press, and circulation of 11,000 copies of well-known American Quaker abolitionist Anthony Benezet's principal pamphlet on slavery to all Members of Parliament

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<sup>319</sup> See Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 70-71 or David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)., p. 234. For Miers, the decision "heralded the end of slavery", Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 4.

<sup>320</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 44.

<sup>321</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 72.

<sup>322</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 234.

<sup>323</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 44.

(MP), justices of the peace and clergy, the assessment in 1785 was “an approbation of our benevolence...but little prospect of success.”<sup>324</sup> The Benezet tract that was circulated rested on the notion that “the Righteous Judge of the whole earth chastiseth nations for their sins...and it can be expected that he will suffer this great iniquity to go unpunished.”<sup>325</sup>

With the addition of three Anglican Evangelical members – two of whom were to become luminaries in the struggle – to a reconstituted version of the earlier Quaker committees, a key non-governmental abolitionist organization was born in May 1787. In 1786, while studying at Cambridge, Thomas Clarkson (the son of an Anglican reverend) won a Latin essay prize for his paper on Vice-Chancellor Peter Peckard’s (an abolitionist) chosen topic of whether it was lawful to enslave the unconsenting. The prize for the essay, which was inspired by Benezet’s work, motivated Clarkson to translate and publish his essay in English in order to appeal to a wider audience. Subsequently, Clarkson was introduced to other abolition sympathizers including Sharp. In the face of the horrors of slavery revealed by his research and conversations, Clarkson reversed course on his decision to follow in his father’s footsteps. He was ordained a deacon but never took on priesthood orders. Along with others (many from the two Quaker committees of 1783), in May 1787, Clarkson and Sharp formed the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (often referred to as the London Committee or the Committee).<sup>326</sup> Apart from Clarkson, Sharp and Philip Sansom, the remaining members of the Society were all Quakers. They were William Dillwyn, Samuel

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, p. 230.

<sup>326</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 73 or Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 234.

Hoare, George Harrison, John Lloyd, Joseph Woods, Richard Phillips, John Barton, Joseph Hooper and James Phillips.<sup>327</sup>

Historian Ian Clark has observed that “...it is very clear that the British Abolition Society was a nongovernmental actor that came to exercise considerable influence over the parliamentary process, and over the British Government.”<sup>328</sup> William Wilberforce (another Evangelical abolitionist luminary), a philanthropist and Member of Parliament (MP) for Yorkshire since 1784, was enlisted to be the Society’s voice in Parliament; Sharp was appointed its chairman. In its original minute, the Society declared “At a Meeting held for the Purpose of taking the Slave Trade into Consideration, it was resolved that the said Trade was both impolitick and unjust”<sup>329</sup> and the Society was conceived as a conduit “for procuring such Information and Evidence, and for distributing Clarkson’s Essay [on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade] and other such Publications, as may tend to the Abolition of the Slave Trade.”<sup>330</sup>

To this effect, the Society’s first order of business was to elaborate a distribution list. By the end of 1787, facilitated by the existence and strength of pre-established Quaker business networks, the Committee established a network of correspondents ready to circulate materials and foment public opinion against the trade in over thirty towns.<sup>331</sup> They owed credit for their ensuing successes in printing materials for circulation to one of their own. James Phillips (a founding Quaker member of the Society) put his publishing house and business contacts at the disposition of the Society (his brother Richard, another member of the

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<sup>327</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, p. 131.

<sup>328</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 48.

<sup>329</sup> Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery* (London: Pan Books, 2006)., p. 96.

<sup>330</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 43.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

Society, became a close friend and collaborator of Clarkson's<sup>332</sup>). In essence, this meant that the Society ran its own publishing house. In the organization's first year of operation, over fifty percent of its total expenditure consisted of printing costs.<sup>333</sup> The Society strategically began circulating shorter tracts that would whet the appetite of readers. One of these was Clarkson's *A Summary View of the Slave Trade, and of the Probable Consequences of its Abolition* (1788) (an abridged version of his Prize Winning *Essay* already published in book form). A second consisted of the Dean of Middleham's (Rev. Dr. Robert Boucher Nickolls) – who had for many years been a resident of the West Indies – *Letter to the Treasurer of the Society instituted for the Purpose of Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1788). In a matter of fifteen months (to August 1788), 15,000 copies of each of these were printed and circulated.<sup>334</sup> More substantial books and titles were made available through the Society (or James Phillips). Titles kept adding themselves to Phillips' budding collection.

A second activity that took up a fair amount of time early on was the development of subscription lists. Subscription lists not only brought in money. As subscriber information was public (status, residence, etc.), it was a form of self-advertisement for the subscriber and served the function of furthering mobilisation of public opinion against the trade (mainly through social emulation); the August 1788 list already contained approximately 2,000 names.<sup>335</sup> Along with circulation of printed material and subscription lists, the Society further demonstrated the shrewd marketing and business skills it had inherited from its mainly Quaker membership by advertising in the press. The early emphasis of the adverts was on marketing information on the progress of the American abolitionist movement. The objective was to try to make converts by striking at the core of Britons' self-perception as "free and

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<sup>332</sup> Clarkson often speaks fondly of strategy sessions and work he conducted with Richard Phillips during the campaign. See Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament*.

<sup>333</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 44.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

enlightened people.”<sup>336</sup> These early activities were undertaken with the view to laying the foundation and establishing momentum for eventual petition campaigns.

With the advent of the Society, Clarkson became the first paid and professional abolitionist.<sup>337</sup> English poet, romantic, and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge characterized Clarkson as a “moral Steam-Engine.”<sup>338</sup> While the Society had started work on publication distribution, subscriptions and advertising<sup>339</sup>, in June 1787, Clarkson was commissioned and dispatched on the first of his numerous – and now famous – voyages.<sup>340</sup> He travelled to Liverpool and Bristol, the English towns with the largest slaving interests, to gather evidence. Clarkson’s life was threatened on this and future voyages; he nearly lost his life on this first voyage in Liverpool.<sup>341</sup> His willingness to put his life on the line testifies to the power of the Evangelical concept of particular providence. Once particular providence directed Clarkson – through cues and various life events – towards the particular task of combating slavery, the conviction and logic informing the idea of the devotional life meant that the task at hand was to be pursued unrelentingly in the face of any and all adversity.<sup>342</sup> Referring to the Society, James Bandinel, the first head of the Foreign Office’s Slave Trade Department, observed that

They collected and published evidence: they wrote and circulated various tracts against the trade. They assembled public meetings; spoke against it; and used all the means in their power for disseminating their opinions on the subject. They soon excited a

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid., p. 45 and 52.

<sup>337</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 235.

<sup>338</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>339</sup> The abolitionist movement is often credited for establishing almost every important tool used by social movements in democratic countries today. For an example see Ibid., p. 6 and pp. 128-129., or Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 187.

<sup>340</sup> It is estimated that Clarkson travelled an estimated 35,000 miles on horseback – mostly by night – during the campaign. Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 4, and Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 74.

<sup>341</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 235 and Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 47.

<sup>342</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, pp. 173-175.

general feeling in England on behalf of the Africans – it spread rapidly...<sup>343</sup>

J.R Oldfield characterizes the Society's role in this mobilisation of public opinion as indispensable.<sup>344</sup>

Clarkson's aim on this first voyage, which lasted five months<sup>345</sup>, was to seek out and collect specimens of items produced in Africa that could potentially substitute for the trade in slaves; to gather information on how slaves were obtained from Africa, transported to the West Indies and how they were treated once there; to encourage interviewees, if required, to come forward to be examined at a later date; to gather comparative information relating to the loss of seamen in the slave trade versus other types of seafaring trades; and, to compare and assess the value of the slave trade in relation to other seafaring trades.<sup>346</sup> By detailed examinations of muster rolls among other means, Clarkson discovered that deaths, illnesses and disabilities among seamen working in the slave trade were considerably higher than that of other seafaring trades.<sup>347</sup> Seamen were not inclined to take posts in slaving vessels; they were often duped into it in order to expunge debts that they were encouraged to contract or they were made to sign contracts while in induced states of advanced inebriation.<sup>348</sup> Sailors were often not shown – even if they expressly requested it – articles of the contracts they signed. These articles contained various clauses whose net effect was to reduce the higher advertised wages to levels lower than that paid for other seafaring trades.<sup>349</sup> In the process of these labours, Clarkson was afforded the opportunity to examine slave ships in order to

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<sup>343</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>344</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 41.

<sup>345</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 119.

<sup>346</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., p. 165, 177 and 197-198.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., pp. 163-164.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p. 164 & 197.

ascertain transport conditions. He discovered that in some vessels, each slave had a mere three to four square feet of space to sit in during the voyage<sup>350</sup> – which, in good weather, lasted three weeks. He also discovered that the procurement process in Africa involved kidnapping, war between Africans with the intent of selling captured prisoners, and even leaders seizing their own subjects to sell in the trade.<sup>351</sup> Many of these occurrences were fomented by slaving interests.

The most disconcerting and exhausting thing that Clarkson encountered throughout most of his voyages was finding witnesses that were willing to speak to him – the frustration is clearly manifest in his chronicles. Witnesses were either forbidden by the slaving interests to do so, or, at the risk of losing their livelihoods or homes, they would speak to Clarkson privately but refuse to go on the public record.<sup>352</sup> It is no surprise then that Clarkson was thrilled whenever he managed to enlist collaborators. On this first voyage he managed to secure the cooperation of two ship surgeons who had already been on slaving voyages and were due to set sail on another.<sup>353</sup> They both agreed to keep detailed journals to be made available as evidence to the Society upon their return. He also secured the testimony and collaboration of a third former ship surgeon, Alexander Falconbridge; Falconbridge would later become a significant contributor to the antislavery struggle. Even at the tune of sixteen hour workdays, Clarkson was so repulsed by his discovery of the ill treatment of sailors, that by the time he returned to London, he had amassed nine cases to represent various sailors in

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., pp. 167-168, 173 and Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament*, vol. II (London: Bibliobazaar (print on demand), 2008 (original 1808)), pp. 12-14.

<sup>353</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament*, vol. I, p. 173.

their causes against ship captains or ship operators. In all, nineteen witnesses were retained for these cases; all at Clarkson's own personal expense.<sup>354</sup>

Despite the difficulties, Clarkson soldiered on. He established contacts along his path building a network on his journey(s); a network which would be crucial for future petition campaigns. In the autumn of 1787, Clarkson wrote to headquarters that once the Society instructed on the proper time to do so, there was grounds to believe that Bridgwater, Monmouth, Bristol, Gloucester, Worcester, Shrewsbury and Chester would all petition.<sup>355</sup> While stopping over in Manchester in October, Clarkson was greeted by Thomas Walker and Thomas Cooper, local organizers and abolition supporters (later founders and members of the Manchester local committee). Walker and Cooper congratulated Clarkson and the Society on the spirit they had kindled nationally on the issue of the abolition of the slave trade. When informed by these gentlemen that Manchester's support "would unquestionably manifest itself further by breaking out into petitions to Parliament for its abolition" Clarkson writes "The news, however, as it astonished, so it almost overpowered me with joy."<sup>356</sup> Meanwhile, in London, the Society was receiving correspondence from various locales within the kingdom with pledges to the same effect, corroborating Clarkson's assessment.<sup>357</sup> However, the organization felt that petitions would exert pressure and have maximum effect if they coincided with parliamentary action; therefore, they held off for the opportune moment.

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid., p. 217. Clarkson's combativeness and zeal sometimes worried the Society. Members wondered if he would become reckless and eventually, a liability. See Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*., pp. 116-119., or Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 79-81. Oldfield's chapter on Clarkson, his role and his impressive commitment and diligence (which Oldfield qualifies as superhuman) to the cause is quite informative.

<sup>355</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. I, p. 207.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 46.



In Clarkson's absence, the Society continued engaging in publication, distribution, subscription and advertisement activities. Moreover, the Society did not limit its activities to the domestic realm. As early as July 1787, correspondence was opened to their counterpart societies in Philadelphia and New York.<sup>358</sup> In August, Pierre Jacques Brissot communicated his warm feelings for the Society and volunteered to facilitate occasional translation and circulation of works in France. He also intimated that, in order to secure the same objectives, a similar society might very well see the day in France.<sup>359</sup> In early 1788, the Marquis de la Fayette also communicated his pleasure at the establishment of the Society and committed to promote its object and to attempt to establish a similar society in France.<sup>360</sup>

By this date, publications from the likes of John Wesley, Alexander Falconbridge (the ship surgeon recruited by Clarkson to provide testimony), and John Newton were being printed and circulated.<sup>361</sup> Wesley, the co-founder of Methodism, a successful Evangelical movement in the United Kingdom (UK), was an active abolitionist that had published a key tract (*Thoughts upon Slavery*) about slavery as early as 1774. Newton, an Evangelical convert and former slaving ship captain, eventually became an Anglican priest and devout abolitionist. His 1788 *Thoughts upon the Slave Trade* became (along with some of his other publications) a significant abolitionist tract.<sup>362</sup> In addition to these publication and dissemination activities, the development and approval of the Society's seal in October 1787 further testifies to the effective transposition of established Quaker business and marketing acumen to the antislavery struggle. The seal's recognisability reached iconic proportions. The depiction of the kneeling slave with the motto 'Am I not a Man and a Brother?' was the

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<sup>358</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. I, p. 220.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., pp. 221-222.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., vol. I, pp. 222-229.

<sup>362</sup> Hochschild characterizes Newton's coming forward as a critical event and credits the awakening of Newton's consciousness on the matter of the slave trade to the abolitionist movement's activities. See Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, pp. 130-131.

brainchild of Quaker potter and businessman, Josiah Wedgwood, a member of the Society. The seal was commercialised and, as Clarkson notes, by 1788, “some gentlemen had Wedgwood’s slave medallion ‘inlaid in gold on the lid of their snuff-boxes’ or that ‘of the ladies, several wore them in bracelets, and others had them fitted up in an ornamental manner as pins for their hair.’”<sup>363</sup> Wedgwood’s creation made abolition fashionable.<sup>364</sup>

Following these initial developments, in late December of 1787, Wilberforce communicated his intention of asking for leave to bring in a bill for the abolition of the slave trade in the next session. The Society set the ball in motion for the petitioning process in early January 1788. However, before the mass of petitions surged in between February and May 1788, Manchester earned itself a special place in British antislavery history by becoming the first locale to deliver a mass-based petition to Parliament for the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>365</sup> Late in December of 1787, 10,639 men in Manchester signed a petition against the slave trade. This represented approximately two-thirds of Manchester’s adult males and undercuts any notion that abolitionism lacked a mass base.<sup>366</sup> Drescher emphasizes how abolitionism was not simply about the ‘affluent and educated’ urbanites that made up the majority of local committees; quite to the contrary, Drescher credits the burgeoning

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<sup>363</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 157.

<sup>364</sup> Wedgwood is repeatedly characterized in the literature as having a flair for marketing and publicity. See Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 128 or Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, pp. 155-163.

<sup>365</sup> There are differing takes on this particular occurrence. Drescher argues that provincial abolitionists took initiative and became independent while others like Davis and Oldfield contend that there is evidence that the local Manchester Committee was in constant touch with the Society after Clarkson’s visit, and it is not clear that the Society’s approval was not sought before proceeding in late December. Notwithstanding, the Manchester petitions are seen as one of the tipping points in arousing further critical support. See Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, ———, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery : British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)., and Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*

<sup>366</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade." Drescher also points to the fact that, of all inland cities in Britain, Manchester probably had a larger stake in the trade than any other. For example, 70 per cent of Manchester’s raw cotton came from the slave colonies of the Caribbean., p. 48.

movement for continuously expanding the potential for participation in it.<sup>367</sup> The following year (1788), with the Society's orchestrations, including London and other localities, the number of petition signatories increased to nearly 100,000.<sup>368</sup> Indeed, as Drescher's statement to begin the current chapter indicated that no pressure groups had urged consideration of the matter before the war of American independence, Drescher later specifies "Between its emergence as a national political movement in 1787 and the internationalization of slave trade abolition at the end of the Napoleonic wars, political abolition became a pioneering organization in mobilizing hitherto untapped groups as actors for philanthropic and social reform."<sup>369</sup>

In addition to the signatories of petitions, Adam Hochschild points to two indicators that are reflective of the effects of the Society's activities. The owners of the city's numerous debating societies staked their livelihood on scheduling events that would bring in audiences (admission was charged). While in the past, the topic of slavery was notably absent from these events, "In February 1788, a Londoner would have been able to attend seven debates on the abolition of the slave trade, half of *all* public debates on record in the city's daily newspapers that month."<sup>370</sup> Another indicator is the result obtained from a brief content analysis of a leading – and conservative – news and gossip journal of the day, *Gentlemen's Magazine*. While its index did not contain a single item about slavery in 1787, there are sixty-eight references for 1788.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> This is manifest in Clarkson interviewing common sailors, women appearing on publicized lists of abolitionist subscribers, womens' only meetings to discuss the slave trade or Africans like Ottobah Cugoan and Olaudah Equiano going from voiceless victims to mobilizers. Ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>368</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 235. These "petitions outnumbered those on all other subjects combined", Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 138.

<sup>369</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 42.

<sup>370</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 129.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid. It is worthy to note that *Gentleman's Magazine* was by no means an abolition supporting publication. Similar content analyses are performed by Oldfield on literature, children's literature, poetry, theatre, and press items. See Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*

Although the number of petitions and signatories surprised even the Committee, the petition campaign was not without its problems. Some petitions advocated abolition; others, the regulation of the trade, while another stream requested a parliamentary inquiry.<sup>372</sup> Nonetheless, against the backdrop of the petitions arriving at Parliament, on February 11, 1788, an Order in Council directed the Board of Trade to begin a fairly comprehensive examination of the slave trade.<sup>373</sup> Wilberforce sent a communiqué to the Society to expand its evidence gathering activities in order to prepare to submit data to the Board of Trade. While evidence gathering continued, the Society, which had already begun lobbying activities, expanded and continued these efforts. As a result of these continued efforts, after careful consideration, two key politicians pledged their allegiance to the cause. William Grenville (later Lord Grenville), son of former PM George Grenville, was an MP representing Buckinghamshire since 1782 (and later became the PM that presided over the 1807 slave trade abolition bill). And William Pitt, son of former MP and Earl of Chatham William Pitt Sr., was an MP for Appleby since 1781 and, in a strange turn of events, as of 1783, became Britain's youngest PM at age 24.<sup>374</sup>

The Board of Trade received conflicting information. One example of the vociferous propaganda contest that was now afoot follows. Rev. Raymund Harris had produced a damaging pro-slavery work entitled *The Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave-Trade*. In response, Rev. James Ramsay, whose abolitionist works and activities long pre-

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<sup>372</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>373</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 74.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid. Drescher highlights how the close friendship between Wilberforce and Pitt may have facilitated Pitt's commitment and cooperation. After all, the same Pitt administration had told the early Quaker committees in 1784 that the time to address the matter had not yet come. See Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", pp. 44-45. As well, Farrell outlines that Grenville and Pitt were cousins., Stephen Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807," in *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, ed. Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007)., p. 145.

dated the Society, published, on scriptural grounds, his *Objections to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, with Answers*. Ramsey (another Evangelical) was a surgeon and sailor that eventually took Holy Orders and established himself in the Caribbean where he militated for the improvement of slave conditions. The Society printed and distributed 3,000 copies of Ramsay's tract; they also printed Rev. John Newton's *Thoughts about the African Slave Trade*. They sent a copy of both to each Member of Parliament.<sup>375</sup> The mass of evidence attending to the horrors of the trade converted many. At this juncture petitions were already received from all major cities and manufacturing centres in the country along with similar sentiments being expressed by commercial interests, the two universities, the church, Quakers and other dissenting bodies.<sup>376</sup> Given the fervour that was generated, the Society did not want to wait until the Board of Trade reported; they wanted to bring forward a motion in the House of Commons. However, Wilberforce had fallen ill.

Given Wilberforce's illness, the Society seemed at odds with how to proceed. Pitt requested a meeting with Sharp. He reiterated his support but thought that it would be beneficial to wait for the Board of Trade's report before taking parliamentary action. He did however promise to put forward a motion making it mandatory for the House to consider the matter early in the following session.<sup>377</sup> In the interim, Clarkson solicited and secured the support of another key MP. Charles Fox, at this stage of his life, was an influential veteran politician. He had already been an MP, Junior Lord of the Admiralty and Lord of the Treasury. Pitt made good on his promise on May 9, 1788. Nonetheless, he stated that in

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<sup>375</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. I, p. 246.

<sup>376</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 77., and Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 49.

<sup>377</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p.79., and Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", pp. 50-51.

presenting the motion on behalf of another person (Wilberforce), it was not right for him, at this premature stage, to divulge on which side of the matter he stood.<sup>378</sup> Fox, and then Edmund Burke (then MP for Wendover), rose and declared that they stood behind abolition. The motion was carried without divisions with Lord Penrhyn and Bamber Gascoyne, the members for Liverpool – the largest slaving port in the country – stating that planters and merchants had been maligned and they were impatient for an inquiry to redress the situation.<sup>379</sup>

The abolitionists had now acquired momentum. While waiting for the Board to report and Parliament to decide on the larger question, the MP for Oxford, Sir William Dolben (son of a vicar and Evangelical supporter), put forth a motion in the House to bring in a bill to regulate the horrific conditions of transport of the ‘middle passage’ (the route to transport slaves from Africa to the West Indies). On May 21, 1788, leave was granted to bring in the bill.<sup>380</sup> Slave ships at Liverpool were examined. It was established that the per slave space allotted on board was 66 inches long, 16 inches wide, while height ranged from 48 to 64 inches; evidence also determined that slaves were chained to each other (hand and foot) and bolted to the deck; they got a pint of water a day, were fed horse beans and yams, and were then made to exercise by jumping up and down in their shackles; if they refused, they were flogged.<sup>381</sup> The bill was officially brought in on June 17, 1788. Liverpool merchants were outraged; they petitioned the House and produced witnesses to attest to the efforts expended

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<sup>378</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p.79. This fits well with Farrell’s statement that Pitt “was an abolitionist by conviction but a politician by practice.” See Farrell, “Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy’: The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.”, p. 143.

<sup>379</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 80.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

to make the passage safe and comfortable claiming that “the middle passage was one of the happiest periods of a negro’s life.”<sup>382</sup>

During the interim period between the motion asking for leave to bring in Dolben’s bill and the day it was actually brought in, Pitt meticulously amassed evidence about the horrors of the middle passage. He presented this evidence in response to the Liverpool merchants’ claims. The merchants retorted that regulating the trade would be tantamount to outright suppression. Pitt publicly broke his moderation and declared himself in favour of the Dolben bill. Part of his statement declared that

It was a trade which it was shocking to humanity to hear detailed; and he hoped that the House would endeavour to extricate themselves from the guilt and remorse which everyone ought to feel, for having suffered such monstrous cruelties to be practised on a helpless and unoffending part of the human kind.<sup>383</sup>

The bill passed in the Commons by a vote of 56 to 5 but was opposed, among others, in the House of Lords by Lord Thurlow.<sup>384</sup>

Thurlow, who was highly influential, characterized this as “a five days fit of philanthropy”.<sup>385</sup> His coming forward as the hard-nosed supporter of the slaving interests resulted in changes to the bill deemed, upon the bill’s return to the Commons, unacceptable. The bill was rejected. This division between the Lords – who were further removed from public pressure and felt no need to interfere in an element of the nation’s naval and commercial supremacy<sup>386</sup> – and the Commons was to continue throughout the antislavery struggle. The legislative cycle repeated itself once more, and finally, upon the second re-introduction, Dolben’s bill passed both Houses and received royal assent on July 11, 1788.

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., pp. 83-84.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>385</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 51.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

Among other health and safety conditions, the most important part of bill imposed per tonnage limits in relation to the number of slaves to be permitted on each vessel. Clarkson recorded the bill as memorable because it was the first successful parliamentary act that put restraints on the slave trade.<sup>387</sup> To capitalize on these developments, the Society coordinated the distribution of 10,000 copies of the debate on Pitt's motion to consider the matter in the following session and the key speeches of the Dolben bill's debates.<sup>388</sup>

While these proceedings were going on in the House, the Society was concerned with the fairly smaller pool of witnesses they had left to provide evidence in relation to those of the slaving interests. In the hopes of alleviating this gap, the Society dispatched Clarkson on his second voyage. On this voyage, Clarkson documents setting the foundations for local committees in Poole, Plymouth and Exeter<sup>389</sup>; however, in relation to the main objective of the mission, he laments that "after having travelled upwards of sixteen hundred miles backwards and forwards, and having conversed with forty-seven persons, who were capable of promoting the cause by their evidence, I could only prevail upon nine, by all the interest I could make, to be examined."<sup>390</sup> By February 1789, the Society had eighteen witnesses to be heard. However, in mid March, the Lords of the Council informed that, given the advanced stage of the session, they could only hear eight; this later became three. Finally, circumstances were such that only one was heard.<sup>391</sup>

Given the passage of the Dolben bill and the momentum acquired by the Society, many arguments now started surfacing in regards to the imprudence of abolishing the trade.

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<sup>387</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 85.

<sup>388</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, pp.50-51.

<sup>389</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, pp. 10-12.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-14.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17. Given the efforts expended in getting these witnesses, Clarkson expresses his deepest disappointment and anger at these turn of events.



The main one emphasised that if the English banned the trade, it would simply allow foreign powers, especially France, to fill the vacuum and reap the rewards. England would not only forgo national income; abolition would neither better serve humanity nor would any moral good come of it.<sup>392</sup> In this context, the argument was that the best course of action on all fronts would be to regulate, not abolish the trade.<sup>393</sup> In response, the Society published and circulated 2,000 copies of Clarkson's newest piece *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade*.<sup>394</sup> The organization also continued pursuing its transnational activity. The Society kept up their correspondence activities with the American and French societies. They also turned their attention to Spain and Portugal. They bound up Clarkson's *Essay* and *Impolicy* and sent it to the King of Spain, the Count d'Aranda, the Marquis de Campomanes and the Chevalier de Pinto.<sup>395</sup>

In March 1789, Wilberforce, now back in the Commons, put forward a motion following up on Pitt's previous year's resolution to consider the matter of the slave trade. The motion carried and the date for consideration of the matter was set for April 23<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>396</sup> In April 1789, Pitt delivered the findings of the Board of Trade to parliament. In order to allow MPs proper time to scrutinize the 850 page report, the original date of April 23<sup>rd</sup> for the House's consideration of the matter was pushed back to May 12<sup>th</sup>. On May 12, 1789, in a speech that lasted three and a half hours, Wilberforce meticulously detailed arguments based on the evidence and pressed parliament to act.<sup>397</sup> Commenting upon Wilberforce's speech, Burke

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<sup>392</sup> ———, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. I, p. 277.

<sup>393</sup> ———, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 26.

<sup>394</sup> ———, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. I, p. 278.

<sup>395</sup> ———, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, pp. 22-23.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-26.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

said it was “equal to anything...ever heard...in modern oratory; and perhaps...not excelled by anything to be met with in Demosthenes.”<sup>398</sup>

At this juncture, the change of tactics evidenced by abolition opponents is indicative of the larger changes in attitude that were taking hold. Given the public fervour raised by the work of the Society, the passing of the Dolben bill and the evidence gathered by the Board, opponents now tried to persuade parliament that the problems highlighted could be alleviated by regulating rather than abolishing the trade.<sup>399</sup> They also began shifting the humanitarian frame of the argument used thus far by the abolitionists; alongside defending against humanitarian claims/accusations, they now placed more emphasis on defending the slaving interests on grounds of commerce and national interest.<sup>400</sup>

...they contended that the negroes were but a step removed from brutes; that it was a kindness to take them from Africa; that the real object of the abolitionists was emancipation; that the slaves, if emancipated, would starve; their masters would be reduced to poverty; and the islands would be ruined; that the planters must be compensated; and the compensation must be from 80 to 100 million; that the English funds would be depressed; and the English commerce in general, annihilated.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 160.

<sup>399</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 87-88., and Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, pp. 27-41.

<sup>400</sup> As per Drescher, apologists for the trade were relegated to this line of argumentation because of a normative shift already under way as a result of “the steady stream of articulated distaste and revulsion that the overseas slave system continuously evoked in eighteenth-century writings.” See Drescher, “Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.”, p. 43., and Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, pp. 24-26.

<sup>401</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 90-91.

In a systematic analysis of parliamentary rhetoric in major debates from 1787-1807, Drescher established that, by a ratio of two or three to one, abolitionists stressed moral reasons while opponents, in the same ratio, emphasized economic and security interests.<sup>402</sup>

The pro-slavery faction in the House now resorted to a new line of argument. They contended that the evidence of the Board, among other things, was “insufficient, defective and contradictory; that it was *ex parte* evidence; that it had been manufactured by ministers; that it was founded chiefly on hearsay, and that the greatest part of it was false.”<sup>403</sup> This was the same inquiry to which the slaving interests had submitted evidence and provided witnesses. They affirmed that it was the right of the House to seek further evidence and conduct their own investigation. Consequently, provision was made to allow for further investigation. After weeks of delay tactics, on the grounds that it was too late in the session to bring the matter to a close, on June 7, 1789, a move to defer the topic to the next session was carried.<sup>404</sup> In response, Dolben presented a bill, carried successfully, to extend the regulations of his former bill by another year; the new bill added some provisions to alleviate some of the ills plaguing seamen employed in the trade.<sup>405</sup> Abolitionists’ spirits were tempered. Not only had parliament been postponed without a vote on the matter; James Ramsay died shortly thereafter.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Drescher, “Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.”, p. 49.

<sup>403</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 52.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>405</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 91., and Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 58.

<sup>406</sup> All accounts indicate that Ramsay finally caved under the continuous and vociferous attacks on his person by slaving interests. In fact, one of these virulent attackers, a plantation owning MP named Crisp Molyneux, triumphantly wrote to his son on the island of St. Kitts that “Ramsay is dead – I have killed him.” See Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 162 and Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, pp. 61-62.

During this period, the Society presided over another marketing coup. They resorted to another key visual medium to rally support. Given the increasing interest and popularity of prints, the Society modified and circulated a print already in circulation; it was contrived and sent to them by the local Plymouth Committee in early 1789.<sup>407</sup> Along with the seal of the Society referred to earlier, the plans and sections of a slave ship print is arguably the most recognizable item associated with the movement. This was a visual depiction of the sections of an actual slave ship (the *Brooks* of Liverpool) with its cargo. It easily and unmistakably conveyed the overcrowding, inadequate conditions and suffering of slaves during the middle passage. It started appearing in newspapers, magazines, books, and pamphlets. In 1788 and 1789 alone, over 8,000 were produced and circulated.<sup>408</sup>

During the recess of 1789, shortly after Clarkson set off on another tour of the kingdom to continue gathering evidence and amassing witnesses in view of the events of the next parliamentary session, he was recalled to London. As early as 1786-87, Pitt had instructed William Eden to try, during negotiations for a commercial treaty with France, to secure agreement on abolishing the slave trade. Wilberforce was privy to this initiative and hoped to undertake similar action with Spain; he was dissuaded from going to Paris himself to follow up on these efforts because of the initial unresponsiveness of the French.<sup>409</sup> However, by 1789, given the news emanating from France, Wilberforce thought it a more opportune time to attempt to get the abolition of the slave trade on the agenda of the various political reforms being sought there. This, for Wilberforce, would serve two functions: if successful, not only would it reduce human suffering but it would tend to eliminate the political

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<sup>407</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>409</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, pp. 323-324.

arguments that had recently gained favour in Britain.<sup>410</sup> Namely, that if the British trade was abolished, the kingdom's biggest commercial rival would reap the material rewards and human suffering would simply continue under another's aegis. Therefore, in order to achieve the abolitionists' objectives at home, it was worth trying to appeal to key figures of the French Revolution "to take the slave trade into their consideration, and incorporate it among the abuses to be done away with in the possessions of France."<sup>411</sup>

The Society dispatched Clarkson to Paris where he met and worked with the likes of Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Jacques Brissot, Etienne Claviere, Marquis de la Fayette, Marquis de Condorcet, Comte de Mirabeau and Abbé Sieyès. Clarkson sat in the committee meetings of the *Société des Amis des Noirs* – the creation of which had been inspired by the birth of the Society. He met and frequently appraised Jacques Necker of the progress of his works in France. It is worthy to mention that he received death threats in France as well. The press, at the instigation of French planters, published injurious stories about him. He was accused of being a British spy, of being kicked out of the Society back at home on account of being too radical and thus ending up in France to "undermine the noble constitution, which was then forming."<sup>412</sup> When, upon Clarkson's discovery, two committee members were expelled from the *Société* on account of being spies, Clarkson decided to address the Members of the National Assembly (MNA) directly.<sup>413</sup>

Clarkson, at Mirabeau's request, assisted Mirabeau in completing a speech to present a motion introducing the issue of the slave trade into the French assembly. In the process, he

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid., pp. 323-324 and Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 65.

<sup>411</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 91.

<sup>412</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, pp. 68-69.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

did some evidence gathering in France about the French portion of the trade.<sup>414</sup> At that time, France's 675,000 slaves on its Caribbean islands were producing more sugar than the British West Indies.<sup>415</sup> Clarkson also met and counselled the deputies of colour from St.Domingue who were in France requesting representation in the new French assembly. One of these representatives was Vincent Ogé, who eventually became one of the instigators of the St.Domingue uprising. These associations would later prove damaging to Clarkson personally<sup>416</sup> and to the abolition movement in Britain generally.

With the assistance of his contacts in France, Clarkson distributed 1,000 copies of the plans and sections of a slave ship and another 1,000 of his translated *Impolicy*.<sup>417</sup> Consequently, additional stories about his activities in France appeared in the press. These once again accused that he was a spy trying to get France to do things in its state of agitation that it would not otherwise do. To this effect, the stories asked "How it happened that England, which had considered the subject coolly and deliberately for eighteen months, and this in a state of internal peace and quietness, had not abolished the Slave-trade?"<sup>418</sup> Clarkson was even requested for and had an audience with the King who was intrigued and receptive to the evidences provided. Finally, before being advised by the Society to return to London, Mirabeau had canvassed the assembly and discovered that only three hundred out of its twelve hundred members would support his motion; another five hundred would have

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-76.

<sup>415</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 182.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid. For example, in 1791, Ogé paid an unannounced visit to Clarkson at his then residence in London. Clarkson was later accused of giving him funds to procure arms for the later St.Domingue uprising. Clarkson always maintained that all he gave him was £30 to secure passage back to St.Domingue. ———, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 191.

<sup>417</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 78.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., p. 79

supported it on the condition that unequivocal proof be shown that England was effectively going to abolish the trade.<sup>419</sup>

After a six month stay in France Clarkson had failed in his objective of getting the French to broach the subject of abolition in their National Assembly. The point about the absence of a British ban was definitely not lost on the French. “As yet, too, England is but considering the subject and has done nothing on it; and, many persons in France would think that England, in wishing France to take the initiative, only aimed at gaining and advantage over her.”<sup>420</sup> Ultimately, while graciously receiving Clarkson and declaring themselves in favour of the principle of abolishing the trade, the French affirmed that the revolution was paramount and issues regarding the slave trade would later flow from it.<sup>421</sup> Nonetheless, along with the previously mentioned international correspondence activities, this voyage illustrates the Society’s willingness and zeal to engage in international and transnational antislavery activity two decades before the British domestic ban materialized and internationalization efforts intensified.

Upon his return to England, Clarkson was once again dispatched to canvass witnesses. After 1,000 miles and seventeen conversations, he secured three witnesses.<sup>422</sup> Once back, he was immediately dispatched out again to alleviate a specific evidentiary gap. The slaving interests claimed that slaves were obtained through trade as opposed to kidnapping, war or other odious means. There was currently no evidence or witnesses that could attest to the contrary. Usually, this part of the slave procurement process was conducted by natives; whites were excluded from these up river expeditions. Clarkson got wind of the existence of a sailor

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>420</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 92.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid., and Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 55.

<sup>422</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II., p. 86.

that had claimed to have been on one of these expeditions. However, the location and name of the individual was unknown. In only three weeks, he travelled to Deptford, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness, Portsmouth, and Plymouth and boarded three hundred and sixteen vessels; on the three hundred seventeenth, he found his man.<sup>423</sup>

The 1789 pro-slavery delay tactics to defer the issue of the slave trade to the following session in the House proved fruitful. When the 1790 session opened, witnesses were once again examined. The evidence the slaving interests produced, including witnesses and published works, not only stemmed the tide, it seems to have reversed it.<sup>424</sup> The main content of this evidence consisted of the accusation that emancipation, not abolition was the goal; that abolition would be the ruin of the islands and British coffers, and would result in the massacre of planters; and, if abolition were to proceed, indemnification to the tune of seventy million pounds would be required.<sup>425</sup> The Society remained active, mainly through the distribution of the plans and sections of a slave ship and the diligent scouring and response in the papers to any pro-slavery arguments. In the meantime, the English trade flourished. In one survey of forts present in Africa in 1791, out of 40, 14 were English with the rest divided between 4 other countries.<sup>426</sup> The 1790 parliamentary session closed with the issue of the slave trade unresolved.

At the beginning of the 1791 session, Clarkson travelled 7,000 miles for four months to secure twenty additional witnesses.<sup>427</sup> Once all witnesses were heard, in the hopes of

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90

<sup>424</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 92-93

<sup>425</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 93.

<sup>426</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 93.

<sup>427</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 101.



making it more accessible, the three folio volumes that the evidence produced was abridged into one book; the Society put it to print and sent a copy to every member of the House.<sup>428</sup> At this point, occurrences outside the Society's control had already started negatively impacting the cause. The French revolution was now afoot for nearly two years, Thomas Paine had recently published his *Rights of Man*, and news of the St.Domingue slave insurrections – started the year before – were regularly published and reported. To make matters worse, the St.Domingue uprising was followed by an insurrection on the British island of Dominica.<sup>429</sup> Abolition opponents quickly capitalized on these developments. They represented the Society as a “nest of Jacobins” plotting to overthrow the state.<sup>430</sup> As Drescher states, “The counter-abolitionist strategy broadened to conflate abolitionism not only with slave emancipation, but with every potential threat to public order, foreign and domestic.”<sup>431</sup> These confluences resonated and took hold – particularly with decision makers and the landed gentry.

Nevertheless, in characteristic fashion that typified the devotion and determination of the Evangelical mind, on April 18, 1791, Wilberforce still moved to introduce a motion to abolish the trade. In a passionate oration, he reiterated the evidence of the miseries and horrors of the trade. He finished by stating

Never, never will we desist, till we have wiped this scandal from the Christian name; till we have relieved ourselves from the load of guilt under which we at present labour; and till we have extinguished every trace of this bloody traffic which our posterity, looking back to the history of these times, will scarcely believed had been suffered to exist so long, a disgrace and dishonour to our country.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid., p. 107. In all, 1,500 copies were circulated, Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 56.

<sup>429</sup> And in various others Caribbean islands. Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 189.

<sup>430</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 107.

<sup>431</sup> “Clarkson even felt impelled to publish a denial of membership in the Jacobin club of Paris”, see Drescher, “Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.”, p. 56.

<sup>432</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 95.

Pitt and Fox spoke in turn. Fox focused strictly on the inhumanity of the trade whilst Pitt spoke both of the inhumanity and potential benefits of abolition to the colonies. Opponents, led by General Tarleton and Lord Sheffield, advanced arguments that evidence of the horrors of the trade were falsified and they returned to the familiar 'humanitarian' theme of delivering the slaves "from barbarism, and beggary to British comfort."<sup>433</sup> They also painted a bleak picture of the economic consequences of abolition.<sup>434</sup> As Tarleton stated on this occasion,

A few ministerial men in the house had been gifted with religious inspiration, and this had been communicated to other imminent personages in it: these enlightened philanthropists had discovered, that it was necessary, for the sake of humanity and for the honour of the nation, that the merchants concerned in the African trade should be persecuted, notwithstanding the sanction of their trade by parliament, and notwithstanding that such persecution must aggrandize the rivals of Great Britain.<sup>435</sup>

At the conclusion of the debate, although many had risen and admitted that they had entered the chamber firm in voting against the motion but had been swayed, the vote was lost by a majority of 75.<sup>436</sup> Clarkson writes "We knew too, that the question had not been carried against us by either evidence or by argument; but that we were the victims of the accidents and circumstances of the time."<sup>437</sup>

It seems that even though parliament was not 'swayed', the population remained firm. In a July 1790 fundraising drive, the Society had managed to amass £2,000.<sup>438</sup> Additionally, immediately following the failure in parliament, a movement that eventually became known

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>434</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 53.

<sup>435</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 129.

<sup>436</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 98., and Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 145.

<sup>437</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 166.

<sup>438</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 57.

as the anti-saccharite movement, developed. People either discontinued the use of sugar or turned to sources other than West Indian produced sugar for their consumption needs.<sup>439</sup> Although the boycott was symbolic, it was certainly significant given that sugar was Britain's largest import at the time.<sup>440</sup> The Society was not the instigator, and given its recent experiences with being conflated with radical movements, it tried to steer clear of any associations that would provide additional fodder for the cannons of their opponents.<sup>441</sup>

At Wilberforce's suggestion, the Society laid the ground for another petition campaign. Clarkson was commissioned to further abridge the most recent condensation of the cumulative mass of evidence gathered thus far. Five thousand copies of *The Abstract* were printed and sent to various parts of the country.<sup>442</sup> Given the mood of the country, it was thought that it would be beneficial to dispatch Clarkson on another tour to ensure the books were not simply gathering dust on shelves. Given Clarkson's deteriorating health, Dr. William Dickson, a Scottish Quaker member of the Society (the Society's man in Scotland), undertook the Scottish portion of the voyage. As opposed to previous tours, rather than collecting evidence, Clarkson and Dickson were mandated to 'excite the flame' by disseminating the evidence already collected.<sup>443</sup> It is noteworthy to point out here that *The Abstract* was significantly different to what the Society had previously produced and/or circulated. It read "more like a report by a modern human rights organization than the moralizing tracts against

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<sup>439</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 171. As Hochschild affirms, akin to today's 'fair trade' branding, there were even merchants that advertised the availability of sugar "produced by the labour of FREEMEN". Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 194.

<sup>440</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 194. Although the word boycott did not yet exist, Hochschild credits the anti-saccharite movement of being, after the Boston Tea Party, the second such occurrence, qualifying the British anti-saccharite instance as clearly more substantial and widespread. The boycott was also novel because it was led by women, a portion of the British population that had hitherto not had a political voice, pp. 195-96.

<sup>441</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 58.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>443</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 54.

slavery that had preceded it.”<sup>444</sup> It contained statistics, documents and sworn testimony but shockingly, no references to the bible.<sup>445</sup> The Society also published extracts of *The Abstract* along with recent Commons debates in the press.<sup>446</sup> Incidentally, on this 6,000 mile tour across England and Wales, Clarkson tabulated that no less than 300,000 people had abandoned the use of sugar.<sup>447</sup>

The evidence disseminating journey was a success. Among others, new local committees sprung up in Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham and Glasgow.<sup>448</sup> In a last minute about face, Wilberforce decided that petitions should precede his next parliamentary attempt. The strategy here was to embarrass the Commons with a strong showing of public support.<sup>449</sup> In February 1792, the Society gave the order to begin petitioning. Given the problems with the 1788 petition campaigns and events that transpired since, the Society exercised firmer control in insuring that petitions were specifically requesting abolition, not emancipation.<sup>450</sup> To quell some of the ongoing accusations that the petition campaign was nothing but the design of “the Jacobins of England”<sup>451</sup>, the Society printed 1,000 of Clarkson’s essay on the causes of the St.Domingue insurrection; they also advertised in the press that the goal of the campaign was abolition, not emancipation.<sup>452</sup> The government received an unprecedented 519

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<sup>444</sup> Hochschild affirms that this was one of the first major works of what, in contemporary times, would come to be known as investigative journalism. Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 197.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>446</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 59.

<sup>447</sup> Clarkson also observes that the boycott cut across all strata of society. Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 172.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid., pp. 172-173.

<sup>449</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 59.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., p. 61

petitions totalling 390,000 signatures.<sup>453</sup> As per one estimate, this may have represented thirteen percent of the adult male population in the Kingdom.<sup>454</sup> In parts of the country, this represented between a quarter and a third of the adult male population; in Manchester the proportion was closer to 50 per cent.<sup>455</sup>

Following the successes of what was thereafter called the great campaign of 1791-92, in April 1792, Wilberforce once again broached the issue by moving a resolution “That the trade, carried on by British subjects for the purpose of obtaining slaves on the coast of Africa, ought to be abolished.”<sup>456</sup> The opposition was able to insert the word ‘gradually’ between the words ‘be’ and ‘abolished’. In this form and under the pressure of the petition campaign, the resolution passed in the Commons by an astounding vote of 230 to 83.<sup>457</sup> On May 23<sup>rd</sup> of the same year, Henry Dundas, a veteran Scottish MP and cabinet minister, was charged with elaborating the particulars of a bill on the basis of the resolution that was carried. Historian Hugh Thomas attributes the parliamentary failures for the abolition of the slave trade in 1792 and 1796 to Dundas’ “skilful obstruction.”<sup>458</sup> Dundas introduced an outline. The abolition of the slave trade was to occur in two steps. First, the portion of the trade in which British merchants supplied foreigners with slaves would cease immediately. The remainder (supply to its own empire) would be abolished in 7 years (by January 1, 1800).<sup>459</sup> The logic was that a segment of British colonies was still in a period of expanding demand for slaves for

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<sup>453</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 237. There is strong historical consensus that this was the largest number of petitions and signatures to reach parliament on a single subject. See Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 54.

<sup>454</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 114.

<sup>455</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 54

<sup>456</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 101.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1444-1870* (London: Picador, 1997)., p. 549.

<sup>459</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 101-102.

cultivation purposes. Pitt, Fox and Wilberforce stood firmly opposed. After successive failed amendments to bring the date of 1800 down to 1793 and 1795, the year 1796 carried the vote by a majority of nineteen.<sup>460</sup> The bill was sent to the Lords where it was warmly received by William Grenville (now Lord Grenville since 1790). However, the Lords insisted on their right to call evidence to their own bar. On account of the session nearing its end, a motion to postpone further inquiry until the following session was carried in the Lords on June 5, 1792.<sup>461</sup>

As a result of the Lords' insistence to carry on with further examinations of their own – even after the extensive Board of Trade and Commons inquiries – Clarkson was required to mount the horse again. Given that initial evidence gathering had begun nearly five years prior, the Society was concerned that some of their witnesses had perished or were out of the kingdom.<sup>462</sup> Once again, given Clarkson's deteriorating health, the Clarkson/Dickson duo was dispatched. Ultimately however, the odds were now stacked against the Society and the abolition movement. Given the Society's success in generating popular clamour, parallel and more radical movements outside the orbit of the Society had developed.<sup>463</sup> This was compounded by the fear of radicalism brought about by the French revolution, the prospects of French revolutionary expansion and the ongoing revolutionary slave uprising in St.Domingue and other Caribbean locales.<sup>464</sup> Even if the Society was careful not to endorse or associate with 'radical' movements, and even if the swell of public opinion and extensive press coverage of the 1792 parliamentary debates relating to the slave trade managed to push

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., p. 103., and Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 145.

<sup>462</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 223.

<sup>463</sup> Examples include the 'anti-saccharite' movement or abstainers seeking fundamental political reform. Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", pp. 55-56.

<sup>464</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810.*, p. 277, Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 147., or Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade : The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (London: Picador, 1997)., p. 537.

the bill through the Commons, the postponement carried in the Lords was followed by a series of developments that reversed the tide and shrunk the political 'opportunity window' for abolition.<sup>465</sup>

Nevertheless, typified by Quaker and Evangelical fervour, the abolitionists carried on. In February 1793, Wilberforce's motion to consider the slave trade was defeated. This motion was clearly a clumsy decision in terms of timing. Just two weeks earlier, France had declared war on Britain. The timing also coincided with a period in Britain, given events mentioned thus far, when the space for the types of activities that the Society engaged in was shrinking. Any form of dissent was progressively being suppressed.<sup>466</sup> This most recent parliamentary failure was, for all intents and purposes, a reversal of the 1792 success in the House. In May of the same year, Wilberforce's motion to bring in a bill to abolish the foreign part of the trade was lost as well.<sup>467</sup> An indicator of the desperation that followed was manifest in the Society's near official endorsement of the sugar boycott in the summer of 1793. Wilberforce's intercession is suspected to have reversed this course.<sup>468</sup> Clarkson went on another gruelling five month evidence amassing journey that ended in early 1794. In the 1794 session, another stab against the foreign portion of the trade was successful in the Commons but overwhelmingly defeated in the Lords.<sup>469</sup>

Finally, the seemingly inevitable happened; Clarkson's constitution caved. Suffering from various physical ailments, Clarkson reluctantly retired from the movement. It is worthwhile reiterating here that Clarkson travelled, rain or shine, a total of approximately

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<sup>465</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", pp. 56-57, and Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 5.

<sup>466</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, pp. 246-47.

<sup>467</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 224.

<sup>468</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 62.

<sup>469</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 227.

35,000 miles for the cause, most of this on horseback by night – not to mention that he was also a prolific author and was frequently called upon by the Society to write.<sup>470</sup> Against a backdrop of the fear of radicalism and French revolutionary expansion, Caribbean slave revolts, a domestic crackdown on dissent and the British share of the slave based world coffee and sugar economy expanding as a consequence of the war with France, the Society gave up its permanent local in London in 1794. It had been there uninterrupted for seven years. The organization only had nine meetings between 1794 and 1797 at none after that until 1804.<sup>471</sup> Although Clarkson's *History* seems to hint that the Society functioned continuously until abolition, research seems to corroborate the temporary inactivity and/or disbanding of the organization between 1797 and 1804.<sup>472</sup>

In 1795, Wilberforce's ambitious move asking for leave to bring in a bill to abolish the entirety of the trade lost by a majority of nineteen. Another stab at total abolition was lost in committee in 1796.<sup>473</sup> Nothing relating to the slave trade was put forth in parliament in 1797. It is worth noting, that during the period from the start of the French revolution until the English seizure of Dutch Guyana, there was a marked decrease in the trade in slaves. This was mainly due to the belligerent rights of visit and search during the war years, which led to the mutual capture of English, French and Dutch vessels that were involved in the trade.<sup>474</sup> When

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<sup>470</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 4, and Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 74. For a partial list of the works that Clarkson authored, see ———, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 76.

<sup>471</sup> The figure of nine comes from a discrepancy between Hochschild's and Oldfield's data. Hochschild claims that between 1794-97 there were six meetings while Oldfield tabulates nine for 1794 alone, See Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 255., and Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 63.

<sup>472</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 63.

<sup>473</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 104.

<sup>474</sup> For an explanation of the logic behind the belligerent rights of visit and search see Holger Lutz Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Journal of the History of International Law* 6, no. 2 (2004), p. 235.



the English conquered Dutch Guyana, the English trade rapidly increased.<sup>475</sup> In 1798, Wilberforce's attempt to introduce a bill that prescribed abolition within a specific time frame was only lost by a majority of four. In 1799, a similar motion was lost by eight.<sup>476</sup> Given the receding margins of the defeats, the abolitionists were buoyed. However, they now decided to adopt a tactical change. Instead of introducing a yearly measure, they decided to hold off until developments would favour the success of their next measure. Consequently, the years 1800 to 1804 did not see any parliamentary activity related to the slave trade.<sup>477</sup> However, Wilberforce persisted in other types of efforts. For example, on the international front, in 1800, he tried, through Henry F. Naylor's influence (Naylor was a personal associate of Fox's that was personally acquainted with Napoleon), to get Napoleon to agree to put abolition on the agenda of upcoming peace negotiations. He also appealed to Rufus King, his personal friend and US minister in London, to exert pressure on the US minister in Paris to the same effect. His appeals to PM Addington and Foreign Secretary Hawkesbury on this front bore no fruit.<sup>478</sup>

Nothing like the popular agitation of the great campaign of 1791-92 was seen again until 1806-07. After 1792, many historians turn their focus to the parliamentary struggle and "conclude that the larger public played little or no role in these last parliamentary initiatives."<sup>479</sup> Drescher argues that this is not entirely true. In light of the fear and reactionary culture prevalent in the 1790s (due to events previously mentioned), public activity took on a

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<sup>475</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 105.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>478</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, pp. 325-326.

<sup>479</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 57., and ———, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", pp. 138-140. For examples of these types of studies see David Brion Davis, "Capitalism, Abolitionism and Hegemony," in *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams*, ed. Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)., and James Walvin, "Abolishing the Slave Trade: Anti-Slavery and Popular Radicalism," in *Artisans, Peasants and Proletarians, 1760-1860: Essays Presented to Gwyn A. Williams*, ed. Clive Emsley and James Walvin (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

different form.<sup>480</sup> It is worth mentioning that abolitionism was the first successful reform movement after the French revolution. Even with the insinuations about Clarkson and Wilberforce and Jacobinism, Wilberforce's parliamentary attempts from 1793 onwards were, as previous paragraphs have detailed, still entertained. By 1802, with Napoleon's France at peace with Britain and Napoleon's restoration of colonial slavery, the links between French radicalism and abolition had eased; by 1804 these associations had subsided.<sup>481</sup>

Napoleon's restoration of slavery made abolition compatible with nationalistic hostility towards the French<sup>482</sup> – with whom the British were at war again. This fact, coupled with the increase in the number of antislavery sympathisers in the Commons (as a result of the Union of Ireland), gave abolitionists a renewed breadth. Space for abolitionist activities was restored. Upon Wilberforce's initiative, the Society was revived in 1804. Veterans were now joined by new members, notably James Stephen (another Evangelical convert). Stephen was a skilled lawyer. During an official posting in the Caribbean, he was disquieted by the general state of affairs there. More specifically, a laughable murder trial of four black slaves in Barbados – whose outcome was considered by many to be a grave miscarriage of justice – pushed Stephen into the abolitionist fold. After his return to England (in 1794), he married Wilberforce's sister in 1800. Stephen's shrewd tactical skills, combined with his legal specialization in matters of Britain's foreign trade, were crucial in the eventual success of the abolition movement. At this juncture, as opposed to its previous incarnation, the Society functioned primarily as a parliamentary lobby. No public agitation was on its agenda and its discretion is reflected in its minimal ten meetings in 1805.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 57.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 236.

<sup>483</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 63.

On March 30<sup>th</sup> 1804, Wilberforce introduced a new bill that would abolish the trade within a specific time frame. It was passed in the Commons but once again, a move to postpone to the next session carried in the Lords.<sup>484</sup> The Lords justified the postponement on the basis that the bill was brought introduced too late in the session.<sup>485</sup> In 1805, this motion was renewed and was this time, expected to pass. Much to the surprise of the abolitionist camp, it was defeated. Clarkson writes “that no fewer than nine members, who had never been absent once in sixteen years when it was agitated, gave way to engagements on the day of the motion, from a belief that it was safe.”<sup>486</sup> In Bandinel’s post-mortem assessment, “It appeared, however, that its loss had been owing more to the confidence of its Friends who stayed away, than to the strength of its Opponents who were present.”<sup>487</sup> Encouraged by this development, the Society decided to regroup.

After an absence of nine years, Clarkson had returned to the Society. For the first time since late 1793, in 1805 he was dispatched on another tour. It was essential that fresh evidence be gathered to supplement the older body in existence. Commenting about this tour, Clarkson remarks that even though the youth of the new generation knew little about the trade (the Society had not circulated books in nine years), he was encouraged by their interest and enthusiasm. He reported that “the ardour, which we had seen with so much admiration in former years, could easily be renewed.”<sup>488</sup> Another indicator of the effects of this new mobilization is reflected in the fact that the West India Committee revived its inactive

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<sup>484</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 112.

<sup>485</sup> Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 145.

<sup>486</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 243.

<sup>487</sup> See Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810.*, p. 346 and Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 113.

<sup>488</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 245.

propaganda committee.<sup>489</sup> Given the Society's newer incarnation as a primarily parliamentary lobby, the work and role of younger leaders like James Stephen and Zachary Macaulay took on an expanded significance.<sup>490</sup> Like Stephen, Macaulay was a former resident of the Caribbean that had witnessed the horrors of slavery first hand. After his return to London and his contact through familial links with Wilberforce, he experienced a conversion which led to his dedication to the cause.

On August 15, 1805, an Order in Council "prohibited British subjects from importing slaves into the colonies which had been conquered by His Majesty's arms during the war then existing".<sup>491</sup> As this was mainly about conquered colonies and about "striking at rival producers, [it] did not require parliamentary sanction and was sufficiently in the national interest not to arouse serious opposition."<sup>492</sup> Whereas the Doblen bill regulated conditions of the trade, this was the first British government act that actually circumscribed a part of the trade. Given what was to transpire in the following year, the death of William Pitt in January 1806 was untimely. Shortly after Pitt's passing, Lord Grenville, who had served as Pitt's Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary, was called upon to form a new government.

The Society now engineered a coup de grace largely credited to Stephen. It is often claimed that what Clarkson and Wilberforce lacked in tactical shrewdness over the years, Stephen more than made up for.<sup>493</sup> He was the instigator of and mastermind behind the Foreign Slave Trade Act. On March 31, 1806, the Attorney General, Sir Arthur Piggott,

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<sup>489</sup> In 1805 slave interests "protested that the 'violent' propaganda being worked up in Yorkshire, Lancashire and London...was becoming a serious deterrent to the flow of capital to the Caribbean." Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.", p. 58., and ———, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 140.

<sup>490</sup> As Oldfield points out, this is reflected by the attention Clarkson pays in his *History* to the period from 1804 to 1807 (only 90 pages of 1,100), Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 85.

<sup>491</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 113. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 6.

<sup>492</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 6.

<sup>493</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 301.

brought in a bill to cement and further the Order in Council of 1805.<sup>494</sup> This bill would disallow British subjects to participate in any form in the slave trade to any foreign territory – not simply to recently conquered colonies. The genius here was that it split slaving interests. On the one hand, slave ship owners stood to lose big. On the other, how could planters disagree with a measure that would deprive their French and Spanish competitors of new slaves? How could any patriot oppose the obstruction of the trade of a country (France) with which Britain had been at war now for a number of years? If the bill was successful, the beauty of the scheme was that it would eliminate half to two thirds of the British slave trade.<sup>495</sup> In the House of Commons, the whole affair was kept very low key (Wilberforce did not even speak). Stephen's brilliant strategy to proceed under the guise of the war effort and the national interest resulted in few members bothering to show up for the vote. The bill sailed through the Commons.

However, by the time the bill got to the Lords, slavers began seeing through the ruse. The bill was vehemently opposed by Manchester magnate Sir Robert Peel. Peel was one of the wealthiest textile manufacturers of the industrial revolution. His industry was reliant on cheap slave produced Caribbean cotton. An emergency petition initiated by Peel and circulated in Manchester yielded 439 signatures. In retaliation, Clarkson launched an emergency appeal to Manchester which, within hours, produced a counter petition with 2,354 signatories.<sup>496</sup> The bill passed through both Houses and received royal assent on May 23, 1806. After the Dolben bill, this was the second successful parliamentary act that put restrictions on the trade. The British trade to foreigners was now illegal. Stephen Farrell underlines the 'psychological precedent' set by the Foreign Slave Trade Act. He affirms that

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<sup>494</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 114.

<sup>495</sup> Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 146.

<sup>496</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 304 and Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", pp. 142-143.

“It provided a precursor to possible total abolition, not least because it actually accounted for a half to two thirds of the total value of the trade.”<sup>497</sup> Many historians have recorded how broaching the matter in 1806 under the cover of national economic and military interest in this fashion was noteworthy.<sup>498</sup> This prompts Clark to note “If many an act of self-interest has been dressed up in the garb of humanitarianism, abolitionism provides the very rare example of the tactic applied in reverse.”<sup>499</sup>

Following the success of 1806, the momentum to abolish the trade seemed irreversible. On June 10, 1806, Fox, now Grenville’s Foreign Secretary<sup>500</sup>, put forth a resolution in the Commons “that this House, considering the African Slave-trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity and policy, will, with all practicable expedition, proceed to take effectual measures for the abolition of the said trade”.<sup>501</sup> The resolution passed in the Commons by a majority of ninety nine. Wilberforce immediately moved an address to His Majesty “praying that he would be graciously pleased, to direct a negotiation to be entered into, by which foreign powers should be invited to cooperate with His Majesty in measures to be adopted for the abolition of the African Slave-trade.”<sup>502</sup> The motion carried unanimously. On June 24, Grenville moved for a resolution in the Lords to concur with the Commons’ first resolution. The resolution to concur was passed with a majority of twenty

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<sup>497</sup> Farrell, "Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 146.

<sup>498</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 49, Davis, *Inhuman Bondage : The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 236, and Farrell, "Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 136.

<sup>499</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 49. Davis credits this wisdom to James Stephen. Davis remarks that “Stephen worked tirelessly as the abolitionists’ professional watchdog, cautioning them to mute humanitarian arguments and to focus on questions of national security.” See Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>500</sup> Farrell, "Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 145.

<sup>501</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 249 and Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 116.

<sup>502</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 255.

one, while the address to the crown carried without divisions.<sup>503</sup> In October 1806, Fox, another notable abolitionist, passed away before seeing the total abolition bill come to fruition the following year. On his death bed, Fox stated that he wished to see two things accomplished: peace with Europe and abolition. He went on to say, "but of the two I wish the latter."<sup>504</sup>

Stephen, the architect of the Foreign Slave Trade Act would also come to be known as a key protagonist and the legal architect behind the 1807 (total) abolition act. Stephen's opinions were communicated to Grenville through Wilberforce. Grenville concurred with Wilberforce that it would be wise to delay any additional motions to follow the successes of 1806. First, it was thought imprudent because it could, as had previously occurred on a number of occasions, be the subject of yet another postponement because it was introduced too late in the session.<sup>505</sup> Second, it was estimated that the oncoming general elections (in the fall) could provide a great opportunity for abolitionists to strengthen their hand. The rationale behind this move was to foment the population to demand that their parliamentary candidates pledge to vote for abolition in exchange for their support. Grenville thought that any additional pro-abolitionist sentiment would also strengthen a new ministry in parliament. The bets paid off. For example, Henry Lascelles, heir to a Barbadian sugar fortune, was forced to withdraw from the Yorkshire candidacy partly on account of his ties to slavery.<sup>506</sup>

On January 2, 1807, in a slight change of strategy, Lord Grenville introduced a bill for the total abolition of the trade in the Lords first. This was a courageous move. Traditionally,

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>504</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction*.

<sup>505</sup> Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 149.

<sup>506</sup> For this and other examples see Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", pp. 144-147. Farrell alludes to the issue being raised in at least ten other constituencies, see Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 148.

as has been illustrated, the Lords were the major obstacle to previous parliamentary endeavours. Grenville secured favourable conditions in the Lords through some brilliant backroom politicking.<sup>507</sup> If the bill was successful in the Lords, MPs in the Commons no longer had the luxury of relying on the Lords to negate the bill. In addition, given the recent election, it could not have been claimed that the people, and by extension the Commons, had not had the luxury to give the matter full consideration.<sup>508</sup> It was carried by a majority of the 100-36 in the Lords and sent to the Commons on February 10, where it passed with a majority of 283-16.<sup>509</sup> The combination of the rationale to put in and secure both houses' approval for a resolution – one the Commons had initially agreed to as far back as 1792 – late in the previous session, coupled with the delaying of a new bill until after the election, had changed the terms of the debate.<sup>510</sup> Yet, the astounding majority in the Commons was still surprising. In comparison to the previous 1805 attempt at total abolition, accounting for the increased number of Commons members, opponents were only able to muster one fifth as many votes as they had in 1805.<sup>511</sup>

According to General Isaac Gascoyne, one of the final bill's staunchest opponents in the House, this can be explained by the fact that

...every measure that invention or art could devise to create a popular clamour was resorted to on this occasion. The church, the theatre, the press, had laboured to create a prejudice against the slave trade...The attempts to make a popular clamour against the trade *were never so conspicuous* as during the late election, when the public newspapers teemed with abuse of the trade, and when *promises were required from different candidates* that they would oppose its continuance. There *never had been any question agitated* since that of parliamentary reform, in which so much industry had been exerted to raise a popular prejudice and clamour, and to make the trade an object

<sup>507</sup> See Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 150-151.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>509</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 236.

<sup>510</sup> Farrell, "'Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy': The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807.", p. 149.

<sup>511</sup> Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 148.



of universal detestation. *In every manufacturing town and borough in the kingdom, all those arts had been tried.*<sup>512</sup>

The bill received royal assent on March 25, 1807.<sup>513</sup> It was the last act of the Grenville administration. The entirety of the British slave trade was now made illegal. The *Edinburgh Review* commented that “the sense of the nation has pressed abolition upon our rulers.”<sup>514</sup>

The Society was a key purveyor of the sense that the *Edinburgh Review* was referring to. Its core membership was made up of Quakers and Evangelicals whose motivation and unrelenting activities were based on dispositions shaped and inspired by their religio-moral convictions and practices (surveyed earlier in this chapter). These feelings are well encapsulated by Clarkson’s affirmations in the first chapter of his *History*. Clarkson affirms that “Among the evils, corrected or subdued, either by the general influence of Christianity on the minds of men, or by particular associations of Christians, the African Slave-trade appears to me to have occupied the foremost place.”<sup>515</sup> Nearing the end of this first chapter, in spurring the reader on to rejoice, he asks that we offer “renewed thanksgivings, to the great Creator of the universe, for the manifestation of this his favour, in having disposed our legislators to take away such a portion of suffering from our fellow-creatures, and such a load of guilt from our native land.”<sup>516</sup>

The final tract that Wilberforce wrote against the British slave trade hinged on the notion that the trade was an affront to Providence. After presenting and speculating about various misfortunes suffered by Britain, Wilberforce concludes “It cannot be denied that there are circumstances in the situation of this country, which, reasoning from experience, we must

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<sup>512</sup> ———, “Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade.”, p. 62

<sup>513</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 121.

<sup>514</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains : The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 307.

<sup>515</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. I, p. 12.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

call marks of a declining empire; but we have, as I firmly believe, the means within ourselves of arresting the progress of this decline. We have been eminently blessed; we have been long spared; let us not presume too far on the forbearance of the Almighty.”<sup>517</sup> The providential judgement element is driven home even more emphatically in Stephen’s *Dangers of Country*. Stephen asks “Can it be denied then, that we have in this great national offence, an adequate cause of the displeasure of Heaven, and of the calamities which have fallen upon the country?” He later continues

But should we next take up a history of the French Revolution, and the fatal wars that have ensued; and learn how strangely the prosperity, peace, and the security of England have been subverted by them, what singular evils we have endured, ever since our first refusal to abolish the slave trade, and by what still greater evils we are at this moment threatened; it would be impossible, I conceive, not to recognize, with wonder and awe, the chastising hand of God. The only difficulty would be, to comprehend how the living witnesses both of the provocation and the punishment, could possibly be unobservant of the visible connection between them.<sup>518</sup>

While conducting a detailed content analysis of petitions, Oldfield reports that most petitions refer to the slave trade as ‘unchristian’; words like repugnant and reproachful emerge.<sup>519</sup> Second, these religious concerns seem to fit neatly with broader humanitarian ideals at work during the age; words like inhumane, unjust and oppressive are frequently inventoried. Slaves are repeatedly referred to as our fellow-creatures while abolitionists refer to themselves as friends of humanity.<sup>520</sup> The notion that the slave trade was a national disgrace is consistent throughout. The public clamour and the language that surfaces in Oldfield’s content analysis mirrors and is preceded by the Society’s (and its collaborators’) ideas, themes, and points; elements which were disseminated via the Committee’s publication, advertisement, networking and lobbying efforts and activities. The type of

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<sup>517</sup> William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; Addressed to the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire* (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1807)., pp. 350-351.

<sup>518</sup> James Stephen, *Dangers of the Country* (Philadelphia: Samuel F. Bradford, 1807)., p. 132.

<sup>519</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery : The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, p. 115.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

evidence presented by Oldfield is compounded by the discrediting of various analyses – inspired by Eric Williams’ seminal decline thesis – that overwhelmingly attribute the end of the British slave trade and slavery to economic and/or security concerns.<sup>521</sup> As Eltis affirms,

In 1800, if one were to argue in terms of economic self-interest, the British should have been actively encouraging the slave trade and slave settlements throughout the world. Such a policy would have been highly effective in achieving national goals as laid down by the amalgam of London merchants and landed gentry who dominated the British government at this time. It would also have best served the material aims of manufacturers and wage earners alike.<sup>522</sup>

## Conclusion

Within the larger framework of the thesis, the evidence reviewed in this chapter illustrates how practices can help us better ascertain processes of change (or rupture). The chapter reviewed how practices that shaped the dispositions of Quakers and Evangelicals conditioned and enabled their reflections, deliberations and actions. When these groups transposed these (practice conditioned) reflections, deliberations and actions into the political arena, their beliefs and arguments ran up against the majority’s deeply entrenched (unreflective) dispositionally conditioned background knowledge(s) underpinning slavery’s

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<sup>521</sup> See Anstey, "Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique.", ———, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, ———, "The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.", Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848.*, Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism.*, ———, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.", Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention.*, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture.*, ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, ———, "Capitalism, Abolition and Hegemony.", ———, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition.*, ———, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective.*, ———, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labour Vs. Slavery in British Emancipation*, Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.*, Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain.*, Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, ———, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", Ethan A. Nadelmann, "Global Prohibition Regimes: The Evolution of Norms in International Society," *International Organization* 44, no. 4 (1990), Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807.*, Quirk and Richardson, "Anti-Slavery, European Identity and International Society: A Macro-Historical Perspective.", ———, "Religion, Urbanisation and Anti-Slavery Mobilisation in Britain, 1787-1833.", Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, Walvin, "The Rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition, 1787-1832." and Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery.*

<sup>522</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.*, p. 6.

long-time normalization and perpetuation. The dialectic of contestation that ensued eventually culminated in the renegotiation of the legitimacy of the practice of slave trading (and later slavery); a delegitimization that led to its abolition. Therefore, a clash of practices was the progenitor of the transformation of the millennia long enduring practice of slave trading.

The account in this chapter also illustrates how, in their zeal, internationalization was on the minds of leading abolitionists early in the struggle. Even before the deal was sealed on the domestic slave trade ban, the Society, from its inception, engaged in international and transnational activity to further its objectives. While presaging abolition's imminent arrival, British abolitionists were not satisfied with confining their objectives to the Kingdom and its empire. This is clearly manifest in the 1806 resolution to His Majesty "praying that he would be graciously pleased, to direct a negotiation to be entered into, by which foreign powers should be invited to cooperate with His Majesty in measures to be adopted for the abolition of the African Slave-trade."<sup>523</sup> It could even be argued that the Society applied the tactic in reverse as early as 1789 when Clarkson was dispatched to France to get the banning of the slave trade on the French National Assembly's agenda in the hopes of applying pressure to get the process moving along at home. The next chapter will turn to the matter of heightened British internationalization activities after the 1807 ban.

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<sup>523</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament.*, vol. II, p. 255.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Externalization and Internationalization: the European Phase**

Internationalizing Antislavery

For more than eighty years after the passing into law of the 1807 British Abolition Act, the British authorities pushed other nations to ban their slave trade and, as of 1833, emancipate their slaves – at times quite doggedly and at considerable expense. As Foreign Secretary George Canning wrote shortly after the 1807 trade ban, abolition “should not be thwarted nor frustrated by the pertinacity of other Powers, in allowing their subjects to continue this disgraceful Traffik”.<sup>524</sup> One study characterizes British antislavery efforts as the most expensive example of international moral action in history.<sup>525</sup> Britain clearly bore the brunt of the cost of doing away with the slave trade (and the institution of slavery). In another examination, the “dismantling of the Atlantic slave system” is described as “one of the most extraordinary processes in history.”<sup>526</sup>

For approximately the first sixty years of the eighty year period in question, British energies were channelled towards the suppression and elimination of the transatlantic trade.<sup>527</sup> Various agreements concluded during this time culminated in a treaty network that effectively put an end to the transatlantic branch of the traffic by 1865. Negotiations were pursued alongside coercive and sometimes legally tenuous suppression measures contravening well established international laws and norms.<sup>528</sup> These measures targeted various nations and were frequently carried out unilaterally and often “in areas where Britain

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<sup>524</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 233.

<sup>525</sup> Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade."

<sup>526</sup> Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 136.

<sup>527</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 1. In Reginald Coupland's assessment, for the first 30 years after the 1814-1815 post war peace settlements, no other question of international affairs consumed more of the Foreign Office's time than the slave trade. Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 156. In a five year period from 1822 to 1827, Foreign Secretary Canning sent over a thousand dispatches on the subject of the slave trade. Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1444-1870.*, p. 595.

<sup>528</sup> For a good summary of British strategies to overcome legal obstacles by attempting to reinterpret/modify international law to accommodate its suppression policies, see Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade."

had little else to gain and often much to lose.”<sup>529</sup> As Suzanne Miers has observed, “The British soon came to think of themselves as...lone crusaders fighting for a righteous cause in an immoral world.”<sup>530</sup> “Britain was at the centre of a great network of treaties which made her, as far as the slave trade was concerned, the undisputed policeman of the high seas. No other nation had such far-reaching powers, or for that matter had assumed such responsibilities.”<sup>531</sup> It is difficult to deny that the British did more to combat the international slave trade and slavery than any other nation. One estimate attributes direct British action with the elimination of 80 percent of the trade.<sup>532</sup> However, it should also be noted that it was the British who perfected the trade and, until 1807, profited most from it and its derivatives.<sup>533</sup>

Britain’s efforts to internationalize the domestic trade ban eventually became enmeshed with a quest to eliminate the institution of slavery. The latter development was stimulated by the 1833 British Emancipation Act, which outlawed slavery in the empire and set approximately 800,000 slaves on their way to becoming free men, women and children.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Andreas and Nadleemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations.*, p. 27. Kaufmann and Pape point out that these measures led to foreign policy disputes that involved some risk to British national security. Kaufmann and Pape, “Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain’s Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, pp. 634-635.

<sup>530</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 15.

<sup>531</sup> ———, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 15.

<sup>532</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.*, p. 249.

<sup>533</sup> Its main derivative being sugar production. James Walvin, “The Slave Trade, Abolition and Public Memory,” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, p. xvii. Between 1791 and 1805, 52 percent of slaves were transported by British ships and British colonies produced 55 percent of the world’s sugar. Kaufmann and Pape, “Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain’s Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, p. 634. The temptation of equating British antislavery crusading with a perception that Britain was a benevolent and sinless society should be avoided. The ill treatment of workers and the exploitation of India and Ireland are examples of events transpiring in the same time frame as the antislavery struggle. In addition, Britain had not had a democratic revolution and the ideal of equality was repugnant to the British elite. Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 9 & 232.

<sup>534</sup> As a result of a domestic campaign that was eerily similar with the one that led to the 1807 traffic ban. Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain.*, p. 19. The Emancipation Act did not immediately free the slaves. It ushered them to the mitigating device of apprenticeship, which was designed to gradually lead them to full freedom. As well, the act did not apply to India and other eastern possessions and African trading posts. See Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention.*, p. 16, Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 232, Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global*

Britain became the first nation in the world to emancipate its slaves. By 1869, of the nations with stakes in the transatlantic geographical area, only Spain and Brazil had not yet abolished slavery. They eventually followed suit in 1886 and 1888 respectively.<sup>535</sup>

Similar to the domestic ban – and perhaps more so because the terrain now encompassed other states – the motivations behind these British actions are far from creating unanimity. Ideational readings are confronted with materialistic and/or power-security interpretations that qualify Britain's efforts as self-interest cloaked under the garb of humanitarianism. These readings rest primarily on the notion that Britain, having foregone a highly lucrative branch of global commerce, now sought to prevent rivals from filling the vacuum and reaping the rewards.<sup>536</sup> Once again, it is important to reiterate that this thesis is not primarily concerned with shedding new light on and/or contributing to this divide. The thesis operates under the assumption that ideational renderings rest on solid evidentiary grounds (inspired, as advanced, by religious non-conformist revival).<sup>537</sup> To briefly elaborate, at various instances during British internationalization efforts, abolitionists successfully convinced (and/or coerced) the British authorities to embark on policies that the authorities

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*Problem.*, p. 5 and Alex Tyrrell, "The 'Moral Radical Party' and the Anglo-Jamaican Campaign for the Abolition of the Negro Apprenticeship System," *The English Historical Review* 99, no. 392 (1984), p. 483.

<sup>535</sup> Andreas and Nadlemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations.*, p. 31.

<sup>536</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810.*, p. 323, Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, p. 236., ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, pp. 56-57 & 83, Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 361, Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 14-15 Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, pp. 4-5 and Jerome Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion," *Journal of Negro History* 53, no. 2 (1968), p. 143.

<sup>537</sup> Ideational explanations dispute the salience of three differing conceptual sources: religious revivalism, non-religious Enlightenment values and changing conceptions regarding economics and production. Had Enlightenment values and the age of revolution been the prevalent driving force, antislavery should logically have taken hold in France and the United States rather than Great Britain. Davis points out that "devout Victorians assumed that good economics was consistent with good religion" Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, p. xviii or David Brion Davis, "James Cropper and the British Anti-Slavery Movement, 1823-1833," *The Journal of Negro History* 46, no. 3 (1961). While Kaufmann and Pape assert that the British antislavery movement "was primarily the product of a parochial religious movement that held particular beliefs and identified slavery as one of a set of interconnected evils for which England would face divine punishment if left uncorrected." Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 643.



felt might be detrimental to Britain's economic, power and/or security interests.<sup>538</sup> Throughout the period, British antislavery diplomacy often provoked the ire of foreign powers, which led to frictions and foreign policy disputes that stood to diminish rather than enhance British security.<sup>539</sup> On the trade side of things, commercial returns as a derivative of British antislavery activities were minimal relative to the resources – not to mention the number of lives – expended to suppress the trade.<sup>540</sup>

Consistent with some of these notions, in a study of the impacts of British public opinion on the Congress of Vienna, Jerome Reich affirms that “abolition differed sharply from other objectives of British foreign policy...in that it was enjoined by organized and vocal public opinion.”<sup>541</sup> Chaim Kaufmann and Robert Pape go further in asserting that “The spiritual and political stakes in this “struggle for the soul of England” were so great that any material losses seemed unimportant by comparison.”<sup>542</sup> Various episodes during the period in question indicate that British subjects – elites and the general population alike – were aware of the sacrifices that were being made.<sup>543</sup> Even when policies led to material (and potential security) losses, the general course was not reversed. British statesman and Prime Minister (PM) Benjamin Disraeli characterized British emancipation as “the greatest blunder in the history of the English people.” He asserted that it “had simultaneously ruined the British

<sup>538</sup> Public opinion was an essential contributor.

<sup>539</sup> These included but were not limited to a short war against Brazil in 1850, war scares with the US in 1841 and Spain in 1853 and disputes with the US about Cuba, Santo Domingo and Central America in the 1850s. Kaufmann and Pape, “Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, p. 635. In the French case Kielstra states that “Without the dexterity of the statesmen involved, a worthy ideal might have sparked a war on more than one occasion.” Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 1.

<sup>540</sup> Brian R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962)., p. 311 and 366, Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 45 and Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery.*

<sup>541</sup> Reich, “The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.”, p. 129.

<sup>542</sup> Kaufmann and Pape, “Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.”, p. 645.

<sup>543</sup> Two of the most salient examples were the domestic battles regarding sugar duties and the effectiveness and justifiability of naval suppression measures. See Coupland., Crawford., Tom L. Franzmann, “Antislavery and Political Economy in the Early Victorian House of Commons: A Research Note on “Capitalist Hegemony”,” *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 3 (1994)., Kaufmann and Pape., Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, C. Duncan Rice, “Humanity Sold for Sugar! The British Abolitionist Response to Free Trade in Slave-Grown Sugar,” *The Historical Journal* 13, no. 3 (1970)., and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*

colonies, encouraged the African slave trade, and revealed ‘the quackery of economic science’!’<sup>544</sup> There seems to be enough evidence to assert that many in the British political establishment were swayed and enlisted in the struggle.<sup>545</sup> There were periods of close cooperation between the British authorities and British antislavery organizations; these cumulative dynamics led to the entrenchment of antislavery objectives in British foreign policy.<sup>546</sup>

The current chapter seeks to begin explaining how British internationalization efforts eventually served as a fulcrum in the global abolition of slavery. This is not to imply that developments elsewhere (such as the US, Haiti, France and Latin America among others) were inconsequential in the trajectory leading to global abolition. As Quirk has observed, many of the events that were not directly related to British efforts served to “*consolidate and extend*, rather than *inspire*, an international trend.”<sup>547</sup> Britain was the premier catalyst responsible for the actual trend. The chapter will illustrate how the continuing dialectic of contestation initiated by non-conformist (practice conditioned) arguments and actions – which ran up against the majority’s deeply entrenched (unreflective) dispositionally conditioned background knowledge(s) underpinning slavery – persisted until the domestic social context was altered. The transformations in question led to the British political establishment’s appropriation of the reformed slavery related understandings emanating from the domestic campaign. In essence, the deeply-ingrained forgotten-as-such collective

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<sup>544</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 245.

<sup>545</sup> A number of these men who were not already sympathetic to the cause were predisposed to be persuaded because of the similarity of their religious convictions to that of the abolitionists. Commitment to the cause and the extent of political, economic and/or military interests that individuals were willing to sacrifice varied from one individual to the next. However, an antislavery ethos made inroads at all levels of British society. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 6 and Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 4.

<sup>546</sup> Anstey, "Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique.", p. 318, Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 645 & 660 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 6 & 109.

<sup>547</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 15.

meanings underpinning slavery (contained in the majority's background knowledge) were altered to the point that, eventually, the making of antislavery internalization a cornerstone of British foreign policy seemed self-evident (or normal). This led to Britain's zealous prosecution of the antislavery struggle into the international arena – and an international dialectic of contestation akin to what non-conformists catalyzed on the domestic British scene that the British authorities would facilitate on the continental European/transatlantic stage.

It is also important to note that once the British authorities committed themselves to the antislavery battle, the fact that Britain was the planet's premier power of the day considerably facilitated the task. Contemporaneous events and conditions – such as the Napoleonic Wars and ensuing Congress system (among others) – allowed the British to utilize their great power status to exercise various forms of leverage to meet their antislavery internationalization objectives. As Christopher Brown has highlighted, self-regarding notions of British exceptionalism and national virtue – precipitated by a “crisis of British liberty” related to the loss of the thirteen colonies – also fuelled antislavery efforts. In light of these and various other developments, after the American War of Independence, antislavery eventually became the litmus test of Britain's moral and national virtue.<sup>548</sup>

### 1807-1823: The Nascent Treaty Network: Setting the Stage

The antislavery mantle was taken over in 1807 by the newly constituted African Institution. Having achieved its primary objective of abolishing Britain's trade, the original Society was disbanded. The African Institution's main objective was to encourage legitimate commerce with Africa as a means of attacking the trade at its source.<sup>549</sup> Its membership

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<sup>548</sup> Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism.*, p. 27 and 450..

<sup>549</sup> Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain.*, p. 29 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 4. Hochschild affirms that, ironically, increases in trade and commerce with Africa in the following decades actually increased the number of slaves toiling on that continent (specifically in West Africa). Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 313.

consisted of most of the earlier Society's members supplemented by new and illustrious affiliates representing the different orders of the British state and society. According to one analyst "Not purpose but membership made the institution imposing."<sup>550</sup> In its early existence, after the failure of Sierra Leone as both a humanitarian and private commercial venture, the Institution took charge of the colony and was intent on turning it around and making it a progressive model for other African nations. For various reasons, the endeavour failed. The Institution increasingly gravitated towards its secondary objectives: ensuring proper enforcement of the new British anti-slave trade law(s) and internationalizing the trade ban.<sup>551</sup>

On the internationalization front, emphasis was initially placed on the main maritime nations now carrying on the bulk of the transatlantic slave trade: France, Portugal (and later Brazil), Spain, and the United States.<sup>552</sup> Given the protagonists in question, it was natural that Britain's initial efforts were deployed on established members of European international society. Diligent work – shades and ranges of persuasive and/or coercive methods<sup>553</sup> – was required to erect the tapestry of legal arrangements amounting to a treaty network with these and other nations.<sup>554</sup> The process was not easy. Various nations remained, at times, quite obdurate. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, France wanted to rebuild its empire and restore its international standing and prestige. A large segment of French society saw a revival of the slave trade as intrinsically linked to the achievement of these objectives.

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<sup>550</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>551</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 2 & 4 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>552</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 153 and Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 235. Even though the US had officially withdrawn from the trade in 1808. Apart from Britain and the US, Denmark, Sweden and Holland had also banned the trade. Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 8.

<sup>553</sup> Expressions like bribery, cajolery and bowing to British pressure are often used, see Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 15. Or in Sir Charles Webster's parlance a "judicious mixture of bullying and bribery."

<sup>554</sup> Andreas and Nadleemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations.*, p. 27.

Portugal (and later Brazil) and Spain had severe labour shortages in their colonies; the significance of the shortages were heightened by impending sugar and coffee booms. And, given its recent relations – and relationship – with the British, the US was adamant on not conceding anything that they thought could potentially enhance British power or contravene US sovereignty. Resistance was further fuelled by these nations' perceptions about the true motives underlying Britain's antislavery policies.

### Initial Overtures

#### Portugal

In April 1807, Britain pressed Portugal to abolish their trade. At a minimum, Foreign Secretary Canning's instruction to Viscount Strangford, then ambassador to Portugal, was to push the Portuguese to refrain from carrying on the traffic in areas of the African coast where Britain had recently abandoned the trade.<sup>555</sup> Portugal's Prince Regent, John VI, citing public opinion and colonial interests, refused the suggestion.<sup>556</sup> However, as a result of the ongoing Napoleonic Wars, by the end of 1807 Portugal was completely dependent on British protection; it was occupied by the French and its court was sitting in exile at Rio.<sup>557</sup> Consequently, Britain succeeded in inserting a slave trade clause in a Treaty of Alliance signed with Portugal in 1810. It bound the Portuguese to "co-operate with his Britannic Majesty in the cause of humanity and justice, by adopting the most efficacious means for bringing about a gradual abolition of the Trade".<sup>558</sup> The Portuguese also committed not to

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<sup>555</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>556</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 234.

<sup>557</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 66.

<sup>558</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 127 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 66.

carry on the trade on the coast of Africa in areas outside its own dominions.<sup>559</sup> In Britain's interpretation, the treaty provided warrant for detention and seizure of Portuguese vessels trading in the newly prohibited areas. This tenuous interpretation rested on the work of the African Institution. The Institution had, from its own funds, prepared a brief of relevant legal texts that the Admiralty had distributed to its commanders.<sup>560</sup> As we shall see, the capture of Portuguese vessels on the basis of these shaky interpretations gave rise to vehement protests and compensation requests from the Portuguese authorities.

## Spain

In July 1809, British envoys were instructed to present a draft copy of the slave trade article of the proposed Treaty of Alliance then under negotiation with Portugal to the Spanish authorities. As a result of Spain's alliance with France during this stage of the Napoleonic Wars, the Spanish did not pay much heed to British overtures; Britain was in no position to pursue the matter further. Circumstances became more favourable for Spain to lend an ear in 1814. In July of that year, although a the offer of £800,000 monetary grant was insufficient for the Spanish to acquiesce to abolishing the trade within five years, Britain was able to obtain an article from the Spanish King in which he "concurred in the fullest manner in the statements of His Britannic Majesty, with respect to the injustice and inhumanity of the traffic in slaves".<sup>561</sup> The King went on to promise that he would give the matter further consideration. He pledged to prohibit his subjects from engaging in the trade for purposes

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<sup>559</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 8.

<sup>560</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", pp. 237-238.

<sup>561</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 131.

other than supplying its own possessions and to take effectual measures to prevent foreigners from using the Spanish flag to engage in the traffic.<sup>562</sup>

France

In the French case, the belligerent status of France rendered any diplomatic movement on the slave trade impossible until 1814.<sup>563</sup> Victory enabled the British to include the issue among matters to be discussed at peace negotiations. Once the Napoleonic Wars had ended, Britain put particular emphasis on convincing the French to outlaw their trade. There were a couple of reasons for this emphasis on France. First, the decade before the French revolution – following which France was plagued by instability and/or war until 1815 – had seen the heyday of the French trade. During that period, the French portion of the trade was only surpassed by that of Great Britain's.<sup>564</sup> The British feared the damage that a revival of this carrying capacity could do to the antislavery cause. Second, the British felt that having France on board, albeit momentarily defeated and incapacitated, would facilitate cooperation from the catholic Iberian states.<sup>565</sup> Consequently, the British secured the insertion of an additional article into the First Peace of Paris. Referring to Louis XVIII, the article read "His most Christian Majesty engages, to unite all his efforts with those of His Britannic Majesty at the approaching Congress [of Vienna], to induce all the powers of Christendom to decree the

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid., pp. 131-132.

<sup>563</sup> On the other hand, the exercise of belligerent rights of search on the high seas during this period enabled Britain to use its superior naval forces to reverse the volume of the slave trade. See Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*., p. 153. As it relates to the slave trade, Britain's conduct on the high seas after the peace would become subject to repeated debate, recriminations and controversy. See Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade."

<sup>564</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*., p. 153 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., p. 18.

<sup>565</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., p. 52 and Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 355. In the same vein, abolitionists and the British authorities eventually even appealed to the Pope – an act that was illegal for British authorities since the reformation. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823*., p. 68, Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 371 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., p. 33.

abolition of the Slave Trade".<sup>566</sup> More significantly, the French committed to entirely abolishing their portion of the traffic within five years.<sup>567</sup>

The five year window met with indignation from abolitionists and the public in Britain. Wilberforce accused Foreign Secretary (Lord) Castlereagh of delivering the "death warrant of a multitude of innocent victims, men, women and children" in Africa.<sup>568</sup> Britain's original condition to return French islands seized during the hostilities was for France to concede to immediate abolition.<sup>569</sup> Talleyrand, the French foreign minister, had responded that France would rather give up its colonies than accept this humiliating imposition.<sup>570</sup> The British authorities were sensitive to the French predicament and were anxious to see the French monarchy properly restored. They were mindful of the potential negative effects that French domestic opinion could have on the re-established monarchy. Various segments of French society favoured the trade. They saw the vibrancy of France's colonial empire and restoration of its international prestige as inextricably linked with the revival of the French traffic. Colonists, merchants, manufacturers and nationalists therefore perceived British pressures as a ploy to prevent France's revival. French abolitionists were too weak to hold

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<sup>566</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., p. 41, Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction*., p. 136 and Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*., p. 4.

<sup>567</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., p. 41, Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*., p. 157, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865*., p. 9 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 130.

<sup>568</sup> Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 159 and Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 358.

<sup>569</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., p. 41, Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 356, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., p. 23 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 130.

<sup>570</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., p. 41, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823*., p. 68, Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 357, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., p. 24 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 130..



sway over the influence that these groups exerted on the French authorities and French popular opinion.<sup>571</sup>

Talleyrand told Lord Aberdeen (a young protégé of Castlereagh's) "I give you [British] entire credit for your sincerity; but I do not believe there is another man in France who considers you sincere."<sup>572</sup> Consequently, at the expense of meeting with severe criticism at the hands of abolitionists at home, Castlereagh had not pushed the French excessively on the matter during negotiations of the First Peace of Paris.<sup>573</sup> Paul Kielstra asserts that this dynamic of both governments being wedged between their respective publics and what was possible, plausible and impossible was to govern Anglo-French relations in slave trade matters for nearly the next half century. "Both quickly learned the dilemma that excessive zeal against the traffic endangered the French *régime*, but slow progress against it could bring down a British cabinet...As much as a humanitarian goal, abolition became a public relations problem. The two governments therefore danced a complicated step."<sup>574</sup>

### The United States

The US case was qualitatively different. Like the British, the US had successfully passed legislation to make the slave trade illegal for American citizens in 1807.<sup>575</sup> Consequently, dealings with the US were more about enforcement and international suppression cooperation. Nevertheless, irritants arose. Two of the more significant issues

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<sup>571</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., pp. 41-42, Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 361, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., pp. 16-20, 24, 35-36 & 40-41 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion."

<sup>572</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., p. 24.

<sup>573</sup> Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 357, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 241 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., pp. 25-28.

<sup>574</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., p. 1.

<sup>575</sup> Similar to Britain, the legislation banned the trade but not slavery. Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*., p. 152.

were related to search rights and the officially illegal trade that kept flourishing under the auspices of the American flag.<sup>576</sup> Incidentally, the failure on the part of various nations – especially France and the US – to accede to Britain's repeated requests for mutual search rights would become a daunting obstacle and source of friction. Britain was adamant on securing mutual search rights because any vessel approached by British cruisers could simply hoist the flag of any nation that would protect them. It would be impossible to suppress the trade without this concession.<sup>577</sup> However, given that reciprocity was a myth, nations felt that conceding this right to the already vastly superior British navy would lead to abuses on the part of the British and further cement Britain's supremacy on the high seas.<sup>578</sup>

### The Congress of Vienna

With the hopes of obtaining a significant multilateral agreement on the slave trade at the Congress of Vienna, the British government also sought to gather momentum by appealing to various other nations with lesser or no stakes in the trade. These activities culminated in 1813 and 1814 in treaties with the Swedes and Danes, the exaction of two decrees from the Dutch, and pledges of cooperation from Russia, Austria and Prussia.<sup>579</sup> The Congress of Vienna was pivotal in the trajectory of internationalizing the trade ban for two

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<sup>576</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 235 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 12. At the insistence of the African Institution, similar flag issues had prompted the British to pass a law in May 1811 to make infringement of the 1807 Abolition Act punishable by transportation. Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 144 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 5.

<sup>577</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 63-65, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 67 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 48 & 169-170.

<sup>578</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 53, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 68, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 245, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 71-72, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 68 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 13.

<sup>579</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 132-135. Introducing humanitarian issues into international relations as a matter of universal concern and using the moral weight of Europe to press countries to restrict or abandon their slave trade were novel strategies for the time. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 51.

reasons. First, since the bilateral British efforts following Britain's domestic slave trade ban, Vienna was the first significant multilateral forum where the issue could be raised. Obtainment of a general European convention against the trade was perceived to be within reach. France was defeated and occupied while two British allies (Portugal and Spain) were rescued in the war by British arms. With three out of four of the major players in the trade adjudged to be amenable to British influence, there was cause for optimism.<sup>580</sup> Prompted by the African Institution, British authorities were making considerable efforts to make sure that the slave trade would be on the Congress' agenda.<sup>581</sup> On the eve of the Congress, in response to the resentment of the British authorities' acceptance of the resumption of the French trade for five additional years at the First Peace of Paris, the African Institution organized and coordinated the delivery of between 800 and 1,370 petitions totalling 1,000,000 to 1,375,000 signatures requesting that the British government expend every effort necessary to internationalize the ban.<sup>582</sup> Clarkson wrote to Nicholas Vansittart; Vansittart was the Chancellor of the Exchequer and was acting as Castlereagh's representative in parliament while the Foreign Secretary was away in Paris. Clarkson warned Vansittart that unless the

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<sup>580</sup> Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 356, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 23 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 10. The slave trade issue was successfully integrated into the Congress system; slave trafficking issues were discussed at meetings in Aix-La-Chapelle in 1818 and Verona in 1822. Andreas and Nadlemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations.*, p. 28.

<sup>581</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 22. For detailed analyses and impact of the conduct of British abolitionists and the British authorities at the Congress of Vienna and the Concert of Europe see Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, chapter II, Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, chapters II, III & IV and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion."

<sup>582</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 317, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 11 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 8. As Kielstra points out, these figures are astounding when one considers the fact that the entire British population of the time totalled 13,000,000 and half the male population, being under 20, was ineligible to sign while women were discouraged from doing so. Of the £4,000 that the African Institution had amassed since its inception in 1807, £1865 was expended for this petition campaign. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 22, 30 & 60. Drescher affirms that the petition campaign was "one of the (if not *the*) most extensively signed petition in the country's history.", Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 160.

“obnoxious article” of the treaty was changed “both houses of Parliament, as well as the newspapers will be let loose on you.”<sup>583</sup>

It was at this crucial juncture in the evolution of the antislavery struggle that it became clear that British governments – current and future – would be taken to task to meet the exacting standards of abolitionists’ religious attitude regarding the slave trade. Kielstra asserts that it is at this point that universal abolition became one of the “fundamental, unnegotiable interests of British foreign policy.”<sup>584</sup> Within weeks, a government that was presiding over a major peace dividend and looking forward to tax relief and lowered foreign expenditures was persuaded to instruct its diplomatic core to offer money and territory to various nations to curtail the slave trade.<sup>585</sup> In 1814, Castlereagh’s communiqué to the marquis de Wellesley, then ambassador to Spain read as follows.

You must really press the Spanish Government to give us some more facilities on the slave trade...the nation is bent upon this object, I believe there is hardly a village that has not met and petitioned upon it; both Houses of Parliament are pledged to press it; and Ministers must make it the basis of their policy.<sup>586</sup>

These sentiments were echoed by the Duke of Wellington to his brother (Wellesley) on the eve of his departure to Paris to take up his new functions as ambassador to France.

I was not aware till I had been some time here [London] of the degree of frenzy existing here about the slave trade. People in general appear to think that it would suit the policy of this nation to go to war to put an end to that *abominable* traffic...<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>583</sup> Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 162 and Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 317.

<sup>584</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>585</sup> Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 162.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.* and Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822."

In the following months, past cooperation and ties that had developed between abolitionists (the original Society, Wilberforce, Clarkson et al.) and the British government reached new heights.<sup>588</sup> From routine information exchange, relations between the African Institution, its members and the British authorities graduated to mutual aid, counsel and strategizing on the basis of shared intelligence (the Institution was regularly made privy to confidential diplomatic information of the highest order). Abolitionists had access to high ranking civil servants, ambassadors, the Foreign Secretary and other cabinet Ministers; government intelligence helped them focus their lobbying efforts while the government benefited from receiving important information that the Institution often had access to (due to its members' connections and ties) before the government.<sup>589</sup>

Apart from being the first multilateral forum where the issue of the slave trade could be raised since the British trade ban, the second and more important reason for the Congress of Vienna's significance was its outcome regarding the slave trade. In a declaration appended to the final act, Austria, England, France, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Spain and Sweden jointly issued the first ever multilateral international condemnation of the traffic. The statement affirmed that the "Trade is repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality", that "the public voice in all civilized countries calls aloud for its prompt suppression" and that the plenipotentiaries of the powers present at the Congress "declare the wish of their

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<sup>588</sup> Clark places the pinnacle of the cooperation between abolitionists and the British authorities at the post-war settlement negotiations. Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., p. 48. Kielstra affirms that the British authorities initially co-opted the friends of Africa in order to rein them in and protect themselves from the parliamentary opposition. Ultimately however, the cooperation evolved and proved beneficial to the cause and to both parties. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., pp. 22-23, 35-36 & 44-45.

<sup>589</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*., p. 48. Upon their separate arrivals in Paris to evaluate how to sway public opinion there, Clarkson, General Macaulay and Charles de Villiers were provided information, introductions and access to the use of the diplomatic bag by the Duke of Wellington (then ambassador to France). On the flip side, when Wellington complained of the added difficulty of his task because of the tone adopted by the British press on slave trade matters, Wilberforce happily obliged by using his contacts to get the press to tone things down. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics*., pp. 34-36 & 42 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 135.

sovereigns to put an end to a scourge which desolates Africa, degrades Europe and afflicts humanity”.<sup>590</sup> It continued however,

Too well acquainted, however, with the sentiments of their Sovereigns, not to perceive, that however honourable may be their views, they cannot be attained without due regard to the interests, the habits, and even the prejudices of their subjects; the said Plenipotentiaries at the same time acknowledge that this general Declaration cannot prejudge the period that each particular Power may consider as most advisable for the definitive Abolition of the Slave Trade.<sup>591</sup>

The Vienna slave trade declaration – and subsequent declarations of this type – have been disparaged by some as being, at a minimum, inefficient, and maximally, ineffectual. Robin Blackburn alludes to loopholes and bad faith which saw the trade increase from 1815 to 1830.<sup>592</sup> Both Miers and P.G Lauren point out that the trade was not made illegal, no time limits were set and no enforcement mechanisms were set up.<sup>593</sup> Conversely, Clark notes that later, both Lauren and Miers reach a similar conclusion. In Miers’ words, the declaration was a “milestone in the struggle against the traffic.”<sup>594</sup> And, for both Miers and Lauren, its net effect was to recognize the trade as an evil that needed to end on the basis of humanitarian principles.<sup>595</sup> Although the objective of securing a multilateral treaty banning the trade eluded

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<sup>590</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>591</sup> Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", pp. 138-140. The addition of this paragraph was demanded by Portugal and Spain. See Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 243.

<sup>592</sup> See Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 47.

<sup>593</sup> Or in Brian Davis’ words, “an abstract and powerless condemnation”, Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 237. Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p. 28, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, pp. 10-11. And ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 14.

<sup>594</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 11.

<sup>595</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 47. On the basis of these notions Clark goes on to develop, through his legitimacy framework, an answer to the question of longer term normative implications vs. shorter term practical accomplishments. Miers even goes as far as calling the Vienna declaration a “first hesitant step in the direction of the present international human rights movement.” Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 15.

the British at Vienna, the Congress and its signatories recognized the evilness of the trade, and thus the desirability of – and commitment to – its termination.<sup>596</sup>

Once states publicly endorsed statements like the slave trade being, in the estimate of “just and enlightened men...repugnant to humanity and universal morality”, or a “scourge that desolated Africa, degraded Europe, and afflicted humanity”,<sup>597</sup> the wheels were set in motion to make its practical elimination a possibility. This was a significant step in the trajectory of renegotiating and internationalizing the illegitimacy of the slave trade (and slavery), which in due course led to a global prohibition regime. As Clark affirms, “the articulation of a *principle* against the slave trade was, in many respects, as important in the long term as what was, or was not, to be done in practice in the short term.” Declarations of this type were crucial in delegitimizing the previously agreed upon appropriateness of the trade (and later the institution of slavery). They established new benchmarks, which meant that future violations would entail costs.<sup>598</sup> As well, the moral force accorded to Britain’s position as a result of the Vienna declaration enhanced its bargaining position for the future; a bargaining position which was to shift its emphasis to bilateral negotiations alongside continuing multilateral efforts.

At this juncture, it is noteworthy to highlight that practice clashes were occurring along two dimensions (concurrently, the battle was being fought along the domestic and foreign fronts). As evidenced by the British authorities’ cautious overtures to European powers, antislavery practices were running up against the dictates of entrenched British interests and practices of statecraft. In addition, the resistance of foreign powers to British overtures attests to the salience of audience issues. Powers like Portugal, Spain and France

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<sup>596</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, pp. 47-48 and what Kielstra calls “an impressive, if unappreciated, diplomatic achievement.” Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 52.

<sup>597</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 55 and Reich, “The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.”, p. 75 & 142-143.

<sup>598</sup> Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, pp. 55-56.

did not share a platform (or were not yet disposed) upon which agreed upon standards of the practice of antislavery could be evaluated. However, on the domestic front, the continuing dialectic of contestation flowing from non-conformists' relentless persistence (inspired by their practice shaped dispositions and drives) continued the process of persuading the authorities to appropriate and externalize the reformed understandings of the legitimacy of the slave trade (and by extension slavery). This spurred the British to continue disseminating antislavery practices to facilitate the creation of such platforms (or dispositions). This is evidenced by the African Institution's role in persuading (or coercing) the British government to reverse course on a major peace dividend and instruct its diplomatic core to offer money and territory to various nations to curtail the slave trade. The impact and importance of these developments at the Congress of Vienna were crucial for the future trajectory of the internationalization of the antislavery struggle. As mentioned, one of these impacts was Britain's enhanced bargaining position in slavery related matters, which facilitated the British authorities' shift in emphasis to bilateral negotiations alongside continuing multilateral efforts.

### Concert of Europe Slave Trade Diplomacy

On 21 January, 1815, protests about the British capture of Portuguese vessels on the basis of Britain's interpretation of Article 10 of the Treaty of Alliance of 1810 led to the signing of a British-Portuguese convention. The tenuous interpretation and application of Article 10 was based on a brief of relevant legal texts prepared by the African Institution and distributed to naval commanders by the British Admiralty. In its fervour to internationally outlaw and suppress the trade, the document incorrectly informed naval captains that the trade was illegal everywhere north of the equator; the Institution's reading also sanctioned the seizure and condemning of Portuguese vessels even if there were no actual stipulations to that



effect in the original treaty.<sup>599</sup> The British authorities had engaged in suppression activities on the basis of legal interpretations and prescriptions advanced by the African Institution. In response to early protests about the British interpretation of the treaty, Castlereagh had defiantly told the Portuguese that if their slavers questioned the legality of British actions, they could take the matter up in British courts.<sup>600</sup> The events had provoked the indignation of the Portuguese. Eventually the British conceded to violating international law and a £300,000 indemnity was paid out for Portuguese slaving vessels seized and condemned since 1810. On the following day (22 January, 1815), a bilateral treaty declared all Portuguese slave trading north of the equator illegal. The Portuguese also pledged to negotiate a further treaty specifying a time frame for the elimination of the whole of their trade; in the interim, they committed to strictly supplying their own transatlantic possessions. In return, the release of the remaining £600,000 from a loan promised to Portugal in 1809 was authorized.<sup>601</sup> Ironically, even though tenuous treaty enforcement interpretations led Britain to pay the indemnity in the first place, the new treaty said nothing specific about enforcement mechanisms.

Accordingly, Castlereagh concluded a separate convention with the Portuguese on 28 July 1817. The Agreement gave Portugal a right to search suspected British slavers while it conceded to Britain the same right north of the line vis-à-vis Portuguese ships. The parties decided to establish mixed commissions for trying and condemning guilty vessels and Portugal committed to passing laws to penalize subjects that violated any stipulations of the

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<sup>599</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 238.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 151-152, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 243, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, pp. 10-11 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 138. Coupland characterizes the £300,000 as a simple bribe disguised as an indemnity, Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 159.

1810, 1815 and 1817 accords.<sup>602</sup> A further indemnity of £225,000 for vessels tenuously captured sweetened the deal.<sup>603</sup> However, as Portugal would repeatedly demonstrate, its commitments and engagements relating to the slave trade were far from earnest. The Portuguese allowed the chartering of slave vessels north of the line; slave vessels were allowed to visit ports that they were not supposed to; Portuguese slavers continued supplying possessions other than their own; and Portuguese commissioners were instructed to frustrate legal proceedings. Even if the agreements were properly enforced, Portugal's ability to carry on the trade south of the line – the area most important to its colonial interests – was not hampered.<sup>604</sup> Loopholes complicated matters. For example, Portuguese slavers could only be tried and condemned if found with slaves on board. In many cases, given that the cost of losing the human cargo was outweighed by the risk of trial and condemnation, crews would be instructed to throw slaves overboard while being chased. This practice was not limited to Portuguese slavers.<sup>605</sup>

In the interim, the African Institution had become quite active in France. The British authorities supported the transnational activities of prominent abolitionists who had gone to France in late 1814 to attempt to sway French public opinion. Initially, the Institution had contacted prominent French abolitionists hoping to spur them on, collaborate and contribute financial support. However, given that many French abolitionists were Jacobins, their influence was now severely diminished. Others were either Protestants or accused of being

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<sup>602</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 152-153

<sup>603</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 246.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid., p. 246 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 23.

<sup>605</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 164, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 13 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 14.

anglophiles (or both). In short, the French movement was atomized and marginal.<sup>606</sup> French abolitionists became supporters and agents of the British antislavery activists.<sup>607</sup> Sticking to a winning formula, Clarkson, General Macaulay (brother of Evangelical abolitionist campaigner Zachary Macaulay and supporter of the British Bible Society) and Charles de Villiers began a pamphleteering and publication campaign. When they realized that it was impossible to have anti slave trade literature published in France, ambassador Wellington became the informal distribution centre for the literature. The ambassador came dangerously close with interfering in French internal affairs.<sup>608</sup>

Despite these efforts, French public opinion remained unchanged. Growing impatient, in their zeal, the African Institution engaged in forceful activities which frustrated the British authorities. On the basis of a misunderstanding between Lord Holland and Talleyrand, Clarkson aggressively intimated that France would give up the trade in exchange for a colonial territorial concession.<sup>609</sup> Upon investigation, Wellington confirmed that this was not the case. However, under constant abolitionist pressure and fearful of the potential backlash, in PM Liverpool's words, in order to "allay a storm, which we should otherwise find it very difficult to weather"<sup>610</sup>, the government was induced to do what it found utterly impractical and counterproductive. On 8 October 1814, Castlereagh made the official offer in Vienna.

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<sup>606</sup> Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 361 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 21 & chapter II.

<sup>607</sup> People like Abbé Grégoire and Madame de Staël helped to translate and adapt literature for the French market. They and others like Sismondi also produced some original works. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>608</sup> Wellington provided Clarkson, Macaulay and de Villiers with information, introductions and access to the use of the diplomatic bag. Ibid., pp. 34-36. People like Clarkson, General Macaulay and Charles de Villiers were heartened with Wellington's zeal. Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 360 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>609</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 47 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 134.

<sup>610</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.* Reich notes that Liverpool, Castlereagh and Wellington repeatedly recorded the political necessity of satisfying popular pressures. Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 129 & 134.

The offer of Trinidad or a monetary grant of £3 million to concede to immediate abolition was refused; the French cited potential negative domestic reaction as a primary reason for the refusal.<sup>611</sup> As reported by Castlereagh, the ensuing failed British attempts to press the French for a mutual right of search to facilitate suppression measures was attributable to the same dynamic.<sup>612</sup> While this episode was unfolding, Liverpool wrote to Wellington that "Mr. Wilberforce and his friends evidently think...abolition...not only worth one island, but...worth anything and everything."<sup>613</sup> Wilberforce had affirmed as much in Parliament. As foreign powers grew aware of the position that the British cabinet was in, Castlereagh later expressed sentiments about the negative effects that such attitudes would have on Britain's bargaining capacity. He feared and complained that foreign powers would demand large concessions to comply with Britain's slave trade related wishes.<sup>614</sup> He was justified in his worries. As Talleyrand had observed, the cause had "become among the English people a passion ranging to fanaticism, which the [British] ministry is no longer free to oppose."<sup>615</sup>

In the Spanish case, Britain obtained treaties that were similar to those negotiated with the Portuguese. An accord concluded on 23 September 1817 abolished the Spanish trade north of the equator and established 30 May 1820 as the date for Spain's total abolition. A

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<sup>611</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 139, Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 163, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 241, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 45-48, Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", pp. 134-135 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 8.

<sup>612</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 242.

<sup>613</sup> Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 363.

<sup>614</sup> The British authorities resented the interference. Ibid., pp. 363-365. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 46-52 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 134. This is also consistent with Hurwitz's argument that the antislavery movement coerced political leaders and forced them to bow to their demands. Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain.*, p. 15.

<sup>615</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 34-35. The sentiment extended itself to Spain and Portugal as well. Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", pp. 134-135.

limited right of search was granted and provisions for establishing mixed commissions were made.<sup>616</sup> However, unless slaves were found on board and were boarded north of the line, the treaty had no jurisdiction. Similar to the Portuguese case, an indemnity – this time £400,000 – was paid to Spain for vessels seized and condemned prior to this treaty.<sup>617</sup> Earlier Spanish protests about the seizures had met with the same arrogance as the early Portuguese protests.<sup>618</sup> Nonetheless, even with an additional article (obtained in December 1822) permitting detention simply on the basis of evidence that slaves were on board during a voyage, much like the Portuguese, the Spanish authorities did little to enforce treaties, conventions and decrees.<sup>619</sup> The putative date of 1820 for complete Spanish abolition came and went and the Spanish flag was still omnipresent in the trade. Spanish colonial authorities aided slave traders; the mixed commissions were rendered ineffectual<sup>620</sup> and the Spanish refused to concede expanded rights of jurisdiction, search or seizure.

Meanwhile, back in France, fortuitous events helped matters along. Upon his return from Elba, Napoleon decreed the abolition of the French trade.<sup>621</sup> After Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo, Castlereagh pressed the restored Louis XVIII to confirm the decree.

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<sup>616</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 246 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 12-13.

<sup>617</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 160 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>618</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 238.

<sup>619</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 160 & 164 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 14.

<sup>620</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 164 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 14.

<sup>621</sup> Many surmise that this was an attempt to curry British favour. Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society.*, p. 42, Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 158, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 68, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 57, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 9, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 15 and Reich, "The Slave Trade at Congress of Vienna: A Study in English Public Opinion.", p. 140. Drescher sees it as an attempt to drive a wedge between Britain and its staunchest allies, Portugal and Spain, in the war against France. Drescher, "Whose Abolition - Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave-Trade.", p. 163. In Fladeland's assessment, it was an attempt to generate good will to stave off a second war to depose him. Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 366.

Given Britain's role in his restoration and France's need for British support to re-establish and consolidate stability, on 30 July 1815, the King had little choice but to accede to the request. The French slave trade was nominally abolished; ensuing difficulties were about rendering the legal changes into reality.<sup>622</sup> Vested interests in France continued to resist and the French authorities were quite apathetic about fulfilling their commitments;<sup>623</sup> the French trade not only persisted, it grew. Under continuing pressure from the African Institution, British diplomats kept exerting pressure on France to grant mutual search rights. The French quickly realized the need to placate the British campaigners. Given that conceding search rights was politically impossible, the only available option was to actually crack down on the trade – or make it look like they were. As a result, Napoleon's original decree confirmed by Louis, was in turn confirmed by an 1818 Act of the French legislature. However, given that the Act did not make engaging in the trade criminal, it was practically ineffectual.<sup>624</sup> The African Institution and British agents kept reporting to Castlereagh about the vigour of the French trade, which increased over 500 per cent between 1817 and 1820.<sup>625</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, p. 318, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 244, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, pp. 9-10 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 15. This time, Britain imposed rather than negotiated abolition on the French. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>623</sup> Some of the apathy was due to bad faith while some had to do with addressing more urgent matters like economic recovery and foreign troop withdrawal. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 62.

<sup>624</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 158, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 68, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 76-80 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 10.

<sup>625</sup> And kept increasing until at least 1825. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 82 & 119.

Final Concert of Europe Efforts

As was the case at the Congress of Vienna, during the prelude to the Aix-La-Chapelle Congress of 1818,<sup>626</sup> the African Institution and the British authorities were collaborating closely. Clarkson and Stephen were consulted beforehand; Stephen and Macaulay provided Castlereagh with information while Wilberforce helped Clarkson with the preparation of a tract destined for the Monarchs attending the Congress. Clarkson was dispatched to Aix to deliver the tract and meet with Tsar Alexander and other officials.<sup>627</sup> Castlereagh advanced three proposals relating to the trade at Aix in 1818. The main protagonist that the British were targeting was France. First, he invited the powers present to accede to mutual search right agreements similar to those that Britain had convened with Portugal and Spain; second, he invited the parties present to apply pressure on Portugal, the only major player in the trade not to have established a total abolition date, to do so; and finally, he also invited the parties present to consider making the trade piracy once Portugal committed to full abolition.<sup>628</sup> Of the three proposals, only the second was unanimously carried.

Before the 1822 Congress of Verona, the African Institution was dispensing much of the same functions as they were now accustomed to delivering. Wilberforce wrote a new tract and kept up correspondence with Liverpool and Canning (Castlereagh's replacement at the Foreign Office); Macaulay and William Allen (a Quaker member of the original Society) were dispatched to Verona where Macaulay provided information while Allen briefed the

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<sup>626</sup> At Britain's request, between Vienna and Aix, fifteen additional multilateral meetings were held regarding the slave trade. Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1444-1870.*, p. 591.

<sup>627</sup> Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 368 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 87-89.

<sup>628</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 170-171 Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 369 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 89.

Duke of Wellington and met with foreign representatives.<sup>629</sup> Despite these efforts and more specific proposals put forth by Wellington,<sup>630</sup> the ultimate outcome for the slave trade at Verona was a resolution reiterating the sentiments expressed seven years prior in Vienna. Verona was the last attempt by Britain to address the slave trade multilaterally within the Concert of Europe. Given the outcomes at Vienna, Aix and Verona, Britain decided to put additional emphasis on bilateral efforts.

### Heightened Bilateral Efforts

An 1817 judicial decision in Britain was succeeded by a revival of the American trade. The decision was the result of an appeal launched in the case of the *Louis*, a French slaver that was seized and condemned by the British.<sup>631</sup> The High Court of Admiralty declared that even if France had legally abolished the trade, the right of search – and subsequently seizure – in times of peace could only be reached by convention.<sup>632</sup> Up to 1814, belligerent rights of visit/search had given the British navy a timely tool to monitor and suppress the trade – especially targeting, but not limited to, nations that had instituted anti-slave trade conventions.<sup>633</sup> For American slavers, the *Louis* decision removed major

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<sup>629</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 120-121

<sup>630</sup> Three proposals were made. First, an invitation to declare the slave trade piracy; second, a request that the powers withdraw slave traders from the protection of their respective flags; and third, a suggestion that the produce of slave trading colonies be denied entry into the countries of the attending parties. Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 171, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 245 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 122.

<sup>631</sup> The French vessel had resisted and the ensuing battle resulted in eight British sailors' deaths, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 70.

<sup>632</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.* pp. 175-176, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", pp. 239-240, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 63 & 71 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 12.

<sup>633</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 153, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.* P. 9 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 11. Britain had already run into some



constraints that had seen them virtually disappear from the African coast since the lost appeal of the *Amedie* case in 1809. The *Amedie*, a US slaver full of human cargo, was seized and condemned by the British. At the time, the action was concomitant with searches of neutral shipping during wartime.<sup>634</sup> In the *Amedie* appeal decision, the High Court of Admiralty had justified the British feat on the basis that the trade was declared unlawful by Britain. Further, given that the trade was illegal for the US at that time as well, the *Amedie*, an American vessel, could not be awarded damages for lost property that could not be legally owned in the first place.<sup>635</sup> Now no longer at war, the *Amedie* precedent was superseded by the *Louis* appeal decision. Until the *Louis* decision, the British persistence in continuing to utilize belligerent search rights well after hostilities had ceased illustrates how an existing practice template was adopted and modified to serve antislavery objectives.

The reinvigorated American trade worried Britain. Shortly after British representatives were attempting to initiate dialogue with the US in late 1819, on 15 May 1820, the US enacted a domestic law making slave trading piracy and a capital offence.<sup>636</sup> In December of the same year, overtures were made to the US government to coordinate suppression measures; a mutual right of search and mixed commissions were part of the suggestions.<sup>637</sup> The proposals were promptly turned down. President Monroe and Secretary of State Adams felt that putting the fate and property of American citizens in the hands of a foreign power infringed sacrosanct individual rights that were an integral basis of the

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trouble with this policy, as witnessed by indemnifications paid to Portugal and Spain. But its zeal to suppress and its failure to secure clearer rights of search resulted in its continued imaginative interpretations of international law to justify these practices. See Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade."

<sup>634</sup> Belligerents could visit and search neutral shipping in order to prevent contraband from aiding the enemy war effort Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 235.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 177.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

country's political institutions; they deemed that such an infringement of sovereignty was not warranted.<sup>638</sup> The US executive felt that coordination would be sufficient to achieve the desired ends. A counterproposal consisting of instructions to both countries' naval forces to expend every effort – short of mutual searches – to assist one another in suppression measures was advanced. Disappointed, the British agreed to the measures and instructions were drafted and issued.<sup>639</sup> The reality of the matter was that the US rejection was mostly related to search rights. The controversial rights of visit associated with the British practice of impressment had been a major cause of the war of 1812.<sup>640</sup> The fresh memories of this and the British exercise of belligerent rights of visit/search during the Napoleonic Wars made conceding search rights to the British unpalatable to the American executive.<sup>641</sup>

On the other hand, the US House of Representatives had taken up the matter of the trade in 1821. The House Committee's report stated that suppression could be quite effective if a qualified right of search was conceded to other maritime powers; it had advised the executive to enter negotiations to that effect.<sup>642</sup> Given Monroe's and Adams' hostility regarding search rights, matters were not pursued further. The following year, a congressional committee revisiting the issue reiterated the House's findings and recommendations.<sup>643</sup> In

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<sup>638</sup> Ibid. and Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", pp. 246-247. President Monroe was generally unsympathetic with abolitionist initiatives. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 123.

<sup>639</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade."

<sup>640</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 167, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 247 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 48.

<sup>641</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 68, Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 367 and Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 247.

<sup>642</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 180-181, Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention.*, p. 189 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 25.

<sup>643</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 25. This time with the proviso that American vessels and citizens be tried by American tribunals as opposed to mixed commissions. See Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the*

March 1823, a near unanimous House of Representatives resolution called on the US President to enter into negotiations with other maritime powers to end the slave trade and declare it piracy under international law.<sup>644</sup> The British felt this was an opportune time to once again appeal to the Americans. In order to avoid conceding mutual search rights and the potential trial of American citizens by mixed commissions, Adams pushed the idea of equating the traffic to piracy at the international level. If enough nations agreed, the principle would coalesce into a rule of international law.<sup>645</sup> Parties could then be legally apprehended, detained and turned over to the authorities of their respective countries for trial.<sup>646</sup> Unfortunately, as we will see later, this endeavour did not pay the desired dividends.

Once again, the bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts documented testify to the fact that the process of reversing the deeply-ingrained (forgotten-as-such) collective meanings underpinning slavery (housed in peoples' background knowledge) and contributing to making antislavery internalization a cornerstone of British foreign policy was comfortably running its course. The extent to which the British were willing to stretch the interpretation of international law to serve the ends of antislavery is one (among many others) good example illustrating how the new understandings surrounding the legitimacy of slave trading were becoming entrenched and externalized in foreign policy. On more than one instance, these actions led to the paying out of very hefty indemnities.

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*Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 184.

<sup>644</sup> Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention.*, p. 189 and Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", pp. 247-248.

<sup>645</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 248.

<sup>646</sup> In the *Louis* judgement Lord Stowell had opined that the only way around the illegality of the right of visit during peacetime was if the slave trade was considered piracy, which it could not be at that time. See *Ibid.*, p. 240.

The Evolution of the Nascent Treaty Network by 1823

Between 1818 and 1823, suppression treaties and articles that were enforced in good faith were also signed with the Dutch. In 1823, Britain also made recognition of the newly independent states of Mexico and Colombia conditional on their pledges to abolish the slave trade.<sup>647</sup> By the end of 1823, of the four leading maritime slave trading nations that Britain had targeted in 1807, all but Portugal had legally and nominally abolished the trade. Even the Portuguese had agreed to restrict their traffic and had pledged to eventually abolish it. However, in practical terms, demand and poor – or sometimes nonexistent – enforcement and/or suppression measures by all four nations meant that the traffic was alive and well under the Portuguese, Spanish, French and American flags.<sup>648</sup> Due in part to the slow progress made on the trade ban internationalization front, as of 1823, British abolitionist energies were redirected inward to the domestic emancipation battle.

The formative years (1807 to 1814) of the British authorities' antislavery internationalization activities required the ever watchful eye of the movement that was born – and evolved – from the religiously inspired movement that led to the 1807 British slave trade ban. The activities of organizations like the African Institution were essential in instigating and shaping Britain's early internationalization efforts. The Institution was vigilant in insuring that the slave trade issue not be marginalized at the expense of what the British government may have regarded as larger security and economic considerations at the close of the Napoleonic Wars. The Institution kept the pressure up by using the leverage that it generated by resorting to mass public agitation on the eve of the Congress of Vienna.

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<sup>647</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 163-164 and 199 and Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 65.

<sup>648</sup> Even if these early treaties were judged to be practically ineffectual, they started a process that was crucial to securing future international cooperation. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 10.

Abolitionists also coerced the British authorities into actions that the government would not have initiated in the absence of the potential of facing domestic crises as a consequence of additional mass public agitation. The offer of Trinidad to the French is one case in point. Another, once again, is the government's reversal on the peace dividend it was intent on capitalizing on before the Congress of Vienna.

As Kielstra has aptly observed, the Congress of Vienna was a watershed in altering the relatively more confrontationalist relationship that existed between British abolitionists and the British authorities. By the opening of the Congress, the process of institutionalizing antislavery objectives in British foreign policy was comfortably running its course. As a result of the government's co-opting of the abolitionists (in the hopes that they could be reined in), the relationship between abolitionists and British administrations took a more collaborationist turn. The heightened cooperation was discernible in the willingness to mutually aid, counsel and strategize with one another on the basis of shared intelligence. This was reflected in the support offered by the government for the Institution's transnational activities in France and the government's reliance on the African Institution for information and counsel, especially in preparation for multilateral meetings like the Congresses of Vienna, Aix and Verona. The thriving activity of the Slave Trade Department within the Foreign Office (created as far back as 1816) is another element testifying to the embedding of antislavery objectives within British foreign policy. In Reginald Coupland's assessment, for the first thirty years after the Napoleonic peace settlements, no other question of international affairs consumed more of the Foreign Office's time than the slave trade.<sup>649</sup>

British labours invested in securing the multilateral declaration condemning the trade and calling for its termination at the Congress of Vienna further facilitated the entrenchment of antislavery objectives in British foreign policy. The declaration cemented the international

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<sup>649</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, p. 156.

antislavery role that Britain had begun ascribing itself since 1807. The campaign that discredited the legitimacy of the slave trade domestically set the stage for ensuing British governments to cast themselves, at the international level, in a role analogous to the one that antislavery organizations (like the Society) held during the domestic campaign. Although it took persistent work for years to come, the international delegitimization of the slave trade (and slavery) can be traced back to the Congress of Vienna's slave trade declaration. The events leading to that declaration can in turn be traced back to the campaign instigated by British antislavery organizations; organizations that were motivated and shaped by religiously inspired practices and convictions. After 1823, even in the absence of non-governmental antislavery pressure (for various reasons, by 1823, abolitionists had turned their energies inwards to fight the domestic emancipation battle), the British authorities persisted with trade ban internationalization efforts. An account of these efforts serves to highlight how the internalization and embedding of antislavery principles in British foreign policy had now acquired a practical inertia. It also cements the notion that British efforts were pivotal in the march towards a global prohibition regime.

### 1823-1839: Squaring the Treaty Network and Internationalizing Emancipation

The shift to attack domestic slavery was precipitated by disappointment with the pace of progress in internationalizing the trade ban and the realization that slave conditions in the empire had not improved since the banning of the British trade in 1807.<sup>650</sup> Antislavery organizations were now engulfed in this new struggle. Consequently, pressures on the government to internationalize the trade ban subsided. The African Institution was disbanded in 1827; many of its members moved on to founding and/or joining newer organizations

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<sup>650</sup> Abolishing slavery would allow Britain to lead by example and add weight and credibility to slave trade/slavery related issues in the international arena. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 12, Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain.*, p. 30 & 42 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 108-109.

focused on the emancipation battle.<sup>651</sup> However, internationalization efforts persisted alongside the heightened domestic activity. This buttresses the argument that antislavery objectives were now institutionalized in British foreign policy objectives. The combination of abolitionist work and popular sentiment/support for the cause meant that “no ever-watchful lobby had to remind the government constantly”<sup>652</sup> anymore. In other words, a tipping point was reached (and crossed). As a result of the conditioning properties of practices precipitating clashes between divergent conventions, the collective meanings contained in background knowledges that were so deeply ingrained through millennia of iterative slavery practices were “reflexively recovered”<sup>653</sup>, challenged, and successfully reversed.

## 1820s

### The United States

In March 1824, parliament passed a bill to equate the slave trade to piracy, meeting the US’ 1823 condition to pursue negotiations on a convention to facilitate suppression measures. A convention was consequently drafted. The first stipulation of the agreement established mutual rights of search for the purposes of suppressing the slave trade on the coasts of Africa, the West Indies and America. The US Senate wanted the word America removed from this stipulation. Senators opposed to Foreign Secretary Adams’ presidential bid accused him of abandoning his previous opposition to conceding search rights; others

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<sup>651</sup> Emancipationists feared that the African Institution was too aristocratic and its preference to work through government channels would be detrimental to the revised cause. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 110 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 10. Two of the main organizations that the activists moved on to form/join were the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Empire (commonly referred to as the Anti-Slavery Society (ASS)) and its 1831 offshoot, the Agency Anti-Slavery Committee (commonly referred to as the Agency Committee). Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 137, Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery.*, pp. 323 & 335, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 110 and Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 5.

<sup>652</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 112.

<sup>653</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18 and Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.", p. 271.

feared cooperation with the British on this matter would eventually lead to cooperation with the British on emancipation.<sup>654</sup> For Britain, the removal of the word America would have been tantamount to rendering the entire convention ineffectual. On account of these disagreements, negotiations eventually petered out and were not followed up.<sup>655</sup>

## Spain

On the Spanish front, in April 1825, Secretary Canning presented the Spanish authorities with evidence of infringement/non-enforcement of its slave trade treaty obligations. Canning advised the Spanish that if the matter were not remedied, Spain could no longer count on British assistance in preserving its Cuban colony. By 1825, Spain had already lost all its mainland possessions in the Americas; Mexico, in a bid to secure itself against Spanish re-conquest designs, had its eye on annexing the final Spanish possession of Cuba.<sup>656</sup> The British threat seems to have had some effect. In January 1826, a royal decree instructed the Cuban authorities, who were highly complicit in contravening slave trade treaty requirements, to uphold obligations and punish violators.<sup>657</sup> In practical terms however, the Cuban authorities ignored the decree.

## Brazil

There was also some development during this period in Brazil. Upon asserting its independence from Portugal, Foreign Secretary Canning had clearly communicated to the Brazilian authorities that Brazil's recognition would be conditional on its abolition of the

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<sup>654</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", pp. 248-249 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 25.

<sup>655</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>656</sup> Paradoxically, Cuba made its allegiance to Spain conditional on the continuation of the trade. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 71.

<sup>657</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 162.



slave trade.<sup>658</sup> Under pressure and at the expense of powerful domestic interests that could threaten his new and fragile regime, Dom Pedro pledged to honour pre-existing treaties negotiated under the aegis of Portugal.<sup>659</sup> In practice however, actions such as awarding licenses to slaving vessels continued unabated. Given that the pre-existing Portuguese treaties did not commit to a full cessation of the trade, Britain entered into negotiations with Brazil (under the threat of unilateral action) to secure a Brazilian commitment to do so. A convention concluded in 1826 was to come into effect three years after the agreement was ratified by both parties. The Brazilian slave trade would be made illegal and declared piracy.<sup>660</sup> The treaty was ratified in March 1827 but the piracy stipulation remained unfulfilled.<sup>661</sup> In theory, this convention would have ended the Brazilian traffic. However, in the familiar pattern developing and contributing to Britain's indignation, the gulf between theory and practice remained substantive. Brazilian authorities continued licensing slave vessels, importing slaves, frustrating the activities of mixed commissions and omitting to punish violators.<sup>662</sup>

## Portugal

In 1826, when Portugal recognized Brazil's independence, by virtue of its previous slave trade covenants, its participation in the trade should have automatically been abolished. Its prior commitments only allowed it to supply its own transatlantic possessions, of which Brazil was the last. Upon recognizing Brazilian independence, Portugal conceded to Great

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<sup>658</sup> Fladeland, "Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822.", p. 372, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 250 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 20.

<sup>659</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 159 and Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 251.

<sup>660</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 166, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823.*, p. 70 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>661</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 21

<sup>662</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 167.

Britain that the “moment is come to put an end to the inhuman Trade in Slaves” and agreed to insert an article to that effect in a commercial treaty then under negotiation with Britain.<sup>663</sup>

Portugal was trying to extract further concessions from the British while Portuguese slavers had already fled to the protection of the new Brazilian flag. The British consequently felt that concluding the negotiations did not warrant conceding to the additional Portuguese demands.<sup>664</sup> In retrospect, as we will see shortly, this was a mistake.

## France

In France, the logjam was finally broken in 1827. The African Institution and the British authorities had never ceased to pressure the French government to enforce their existing slave trade engagements. An inordinate amount of evidence and documentation was continuously presented to Paris to attest to the vibrancy and growth of the French trade; the British navy was also (illegally) harassing French slavers off the West African coast.<sup>665</sup> These British activities coincided with a French anti-slavery movement acquiring steam since the mid 1820s. Using pages from the original British Society’s playbook, activities such as petitioning and visiting ports and ships to document the horrors of the trade started making an impact on the French public and ruling classes.<sup>666</sup> Consequently, an April 1827 law introduced punishments of fines, imprisonment and banishment for Frenchmen engaged in the traffic. Britain seized the opportunity to once again push for a mutual right of search. Citing French public sentiment, the French authorities replied that the time was still

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<sup>663</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 250.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid.

<sup>665</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 124-128.

<sup>666</sup> The petitions were coordinated by the *Société de la morale chrétienne*’s Anti-Slave Trade Committee which was presided by Auguste de Staël. It was de Staël who visited ships at the port of Nantes (like Clarkson had done in Liverpool and Bristol decades before). Ibid., pp. 131-134, and Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)., pp. 8-12..

inopportune.<sup>667</sup> Between 1824 and 1829, various traffic related agreements were also concluded with Sweden, Buenos Aires, Colombia and Mexico.<sup>668</sup>

### 1830s

#### Portugal

In the early 1830s, the fact that an explicit treaty putting an end to the Portuguese trade was not finalized in 1826 came back to haunt the British. When the Brazilian flag no longer afforded protection as of 1830, traffickers of all nations once again moved back to Portuguese colours. Britain demanded – to no avail – that Portugal abide by and enforce its slave trade conventions. Portugal had been embroiled in a civil war and a state of general disarray since 1826. With a semblance of stability restored in 1834, the British pressured the Portuguese to negotiate a new convention by which it would abolish the entirety of its trade definitively. Portugal resolutely refused to sign a new treaty with Britain. Following a strong protest by Foreign Secretary (Lord) Palmerston, in December 1836, a Portuguese royal decree proclaimed the trade illegal and affixed punishments for violation.<sup>669</sup> Enforcement was left up to Portugal. The decree prompted strong opposition and secessionist fears from Angola and Mozambique. With its poor antislavery record, a weak navy, empty coffers and corrupt officials, Portugal's enforcement efforts remained lacklustre.<sup>670</sup>

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<sup>667</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 172. One of the arguments that actually swung the French chambers in favour of the legislation was that effective suppression of the trade would allay British demands for a search right agreement. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 136.

<sup>668</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 168.

<sup>669</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 251.

<sup>670</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 24.

Britain was now resolutely intent on securing a treaty with Portugal that would grant it the power to apply appropriate suppression measures. In Palmerston's words, the British government could not tolerate "the continuance of that system of piracy, and of that war upon the human race, which, to the disgrace and scandal of the civilized world, the flag of Portugal at present invests with impunity."<sup>671</sup> The British protested that the Portuguese had, since their first pledges in 1810, consistently violated and acted in bad faith in relation to their slave trade commitments. A further argument was made that given that the Portuguese trade was made *de jure* illegal with the loss of Brazil, this would legally entitle Britain to suppress the Portuguese traffic.<sup>672</sup> In 1838, in a final bid before taking unilateral action, the British drew up a treaty and presented an ultimatum to Portugal. The Portuguese refused to sign protesting that Britain was trying to interfere with Portugal's commercial rights and sovereignty. In August 1839, a bill was passed in parliament authorizing British cruisers to detain, try and condemn slaving vessels flying the Portuguese flag.<sup>673</sup> This show of force, followed by vigorous naval action, accomplished the desired end; within a relatively short period thereafter, the Portuguese flag virtually disappeared from slave vessels' masts. Lord Aberdeen, Palmerston's successor at the Foreign office, was critical of the policy. He intimated that the actions were inconsistent with the friendly relations that subsisted between England and Portugal and the marked hostility may have led to war if the actions were directed against a greater power.<sup>674</sup> Yet, as a testimony to the commitment of the British to suppress the trade, as will be outlined later, Aberdeen ironically persisted with the policy until a formal treaty banned the Portuguese trade in 1842.

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<sup>671</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", pp. 251-252.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., p. 251

<sup>673</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 165, Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 252, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, pp. 22-23 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 24.

<sup>674</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 253.

## Spain

Very similar to events in Portugal, overtures and proposals to Spain in the early 30s went unheeded. This was the case in an 1830 attempt to secure an article to condemn Spanish vessels equipped for the trade and an 1831 bid to do the same plus declare the traffic piracy and order authorities in Cuba to comply with Spain's slave trade conventions.<sup>675</sup> With the advent of a constitutional monarchy in Spain in 1832, further pressure was exerted. In 1834, the Spanish verbally committed to faithfully executing the stipulations of its 1817 treaty with Great Britain (the convention that was supposed to bring an end to its traffic by 1820). It declared itself ready to sign further stipulations to that effect.<sup>676</sup> In June 1835, Spain signed a new treaty with Great Britain for the abolition of its slave trade. The treaty allowed for a mutual right of search and established courts with powers to condemn vessels; it contained an equipment clause and a proviso that Spain would thereafter institute a law to punish violators.<sup>677</sup> Spain's execution of the treaty was unenthusiastic; punishment for violators was never enacted and Cuba kept importing slaves via vessels flying other flags. However, the treaty had the desired effect. With Britain now having the legal ability to suppress, risks and costs to Spanish slavers increased dramatically.<sup>678</sup> From a high of 42 in 1835, the number of Spanish vessels unloading human cargo in Cuba decreased to 7 in 1840.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>675</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 227-228.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., pp. 230-231 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 16.

<sup>678</sup> The logistical difficulties and costs involved in changing vessel registration and flags, coupled with exorbitant rises in insurance costs, dissuaded many Spanish slavers. Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 17.

<sup>679</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, p. 232-233.

## France

On the French front, following the French law that instituted punishments for trafficking in 1827, the French authorities started an earnest crackdown on the trade. Initial results were encouraging. The 1825-1828 period saw sharp decreases that were however followed by increases in 1829 and 1830.<sup>680</sup> The increases were supplemented by amplified British seizures of French slavers – still illegal – and reports from Africa, America and France about the persistence of the French trade. Consequently, the notion that the only effective way to suppress the trade was through convened mutual search rights was strengthened. The fall of the Bourbons in 1830 saw a government populated by abolitionists coming to power in France.<sup>681</sup> A final (March 1831) French abolition bill that strengthened previous acts was followed by a breakthrough regarding search rights. The breakthrough was hastened by the French realization of their inability to successfully suppress on their own compounded by the flight of foreign slavers to their flag.<sup>682</sup> The choice was between continually protesting illegal British seizures and coming to an arrangement to regulate them. After seventeen years of steadfast British pressure, a treaty conceding mutual search rights was finally concluded in 1831. In March 1833, additional articles secured an equipment clause and provided for seized vessels to be turned over to their respective authorities for trial; the articles also provided for the condemnation and breakup of vessels found guilty of trafficking.<sup>683</sup> By 1840, the French trade had virtually disappeared.

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<sup>680</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 143. The increases were partly attributable to the coming of power of an Ultra-Royalist administration in France in 1829.

<sup>681</sup> The slave trade or slavery played no part in igniting the July Revolution. However, most ministers and politicians in the new administration either supported the *Société de la morale chrétienne* or were members of it. The *Société's* Anti-Slave Trade Committee was instrumental in bringing about the opinion shift that precipitated an 1827 act introducing punishments of fines, imprisonment and banishment for Frenchmen engaged in the traffic.

<sup>682</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 152-156.

<sup>683</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the*

## The United States

France now joined Great Britain in presenting a formal request to the United States to join in a union to suppress the trade. The Americans responded that it would be sufficient for American and global interests for the US to enforce its own laws regarding the traffic. However, its lax enforcement meant that Spanish, Portuguese, French and Brazilian slavers, whose trade was abolished and subject to legal suppression, now flocked to the US flag. A formal British representation that nothing was being done to prevent this was delivered to the American authorities in 1839. During this period, additional zealous British suppression activities irritating the US authorities were justified by yet another innovative international law interpretation.<sup>684</sup> In order to counter the false use of the American flag, Palmerston invoked a differentiation between peacetime rights of visit and conventional rights of search. Britain upheld that it was entirely legal for its navy, during times of peace, to visit suspect vessels on the high seas to verify if their registration documents were authentic and matched the flag they were flying. This enabled them to visit ships suspected of misrepresenting their colours. If the vessels were found not to be genuinely American, search conventions negotiated with other nations would kick in; if applicable, detentions and seizures could be affected. If the vessels were validated American, they would simply be allowed to continue on their way and carry on with the object of their voyage. Although the US argued that this was not consistent with international custom and practice, matters stood as they were into the

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*Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 242-243, Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, pp. 158-160, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 15 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 16.

<sup>684</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, p. 72. The various tenuous British interpretations of international law to suppress the traffic over the years – which led to protests and the paying out of indemnities – contributed to ill will and the perception that the true British aim was to disrupt the trade of other nations. Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 14. The perception was fuelled by the recent memory of Britain's high-handed interference in neutral shipping during the Napoleonic wars. Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 163.

early 40s.<sup>685</sup> The mid 30s to the early 40s also saw various slave trade treaties, conventions and articles concluded between Great Britain and nations with lesser or no stakes in the traffic.<sup>686</sup>

By the late 1830s, agreements granting mutual search rights with Portugal and the United States were the two elements missing to square the treaty network. The British had acquired the legal right to suppress the French, Spanish and Brazilian trades. In practical terms however, the perennial game of flag swapping and half-hearted treaty observation meant that the trade was still an active enterprise. On the domestic front, in 1839, following the precipitated end of the apprenticeship system (as a result of abolitionist pressures) put into place after the 1833 Emancipation Act,<sup>687</sup> abolitionists now (re)turned their sights to the international scene; the elimination of slavery was now appended to the goal of internationalizing the trade ban.<sup>688</sup> Due to various evolving circumstances however – as will be highlighted in chapters 5 and 6 – post 1860s efforts took on a qualitatively different form and were pursued with varying degrees of vigour and consistency. For the moment, the current chapter will conclude with an exploration of the final British efforts that precipitated the legal end of slave trading for the major transatlantic nations that were engaged in the traffic. These efforts set the stage and conditioned the expansion of the antislavery struggle beyond the transatlantic geographical area.

With practice clashes somewhat subsiding along the domestic dimension of the two-dimensional battle alluded to earlier in this chapter, the foreign dimension took on added

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<sup>685</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 254-255 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 69.

<sup>686</sup> These included Holland, Sweden, Sardinia, Hanse Towns, Naples, Austria, Russia, Prussia, Haiti, Texas, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. There was even a papal bull issued from Rome during this period. See Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as Connected with Europe and America from the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts Made by the British Government for Its Extinction.*, pp. 236-262.

<sup>687</sup> Domestic battles that had similar echoes in terms of antislavery organizations applying pressure – using now familiar tactics and strategies – on the British authorities to achieve their objectives.

<sup>688</sup> For a good analysis, see Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*



significance. As antislavery was now a well-established and significant component of British foreign policy, the effects of British antislavery internationalization were eroding the resistance of foreign powers to British overtures (or impositions). Through diplomatic (at times tenuous and forceful) and navy suppression activities, the externalization of British antislavery practices facilitated the process of establishing, in target states, the necessary dispositions on the basis of which agreed upon standards of the practice of antislavery could be evaluated. It was becoming more common to hear reiterations (and variations on the themes) of the declarations made (and benchmarks set) at the Congress of Vienna. Statements by states like Spain and Portugal about the time being ripe to finally effectively abolish and suppress their participation in the trade attest to this fact. In the French case, after the French portion of the trade was effectively abolished, France joined Britain in attempting to sway the US to effectively suppress the illegitimate use of the US flag in continuing illicit traffic. As we will see in Chapter Five, once converted, it became commonplace for European powers to brandish their antislavery practices and credentials in non-European/transatlantic world quarters.

### 1839-1870: Persistence in Internationalizing the Trade Ban

Britain's heavy-handed actions towards Portugal finally made the Portuguese cave in 1842.<sup>689</sup> A slave trade treaty providing for mutual search rights (including an equipment clause) and the set up of mixed commissions was concluded.<sup>690</sup> Lord Aberdeen, Palmerston's successor at the Foreign Office, repealed Palmerston's 1839 act authorizing unilateral suppression measures by the British navy. By the early 40s, the Portuguese, Spanish, French and Brazilian trades were legally abolished and mutual search rights were established with

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<sup>689</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, p. 165 and Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 659.

<sup>690</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 253 and Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade: 1839-1865.*, p. 73.

each of those countries. In the perennial game of cat and mouse, slavers were left with a single option; the protection of the American flag.<sup>691</sup> Securing US cooperation was the final piece of the puzzle in squaring the treaty network.

The Americans were still irritated with Palmerston's legal 'innovation' of peacetime visits by British cruisers to ascertain the authenticity of the nationality of vessels flying the US flag. Aberdeen upheld Palmerston's claims to this right. The British were fully cognizant that the success of the time, money and lives invested thus far in internationalizing the trade ban hinged on finding a solution to the US' persistence in resisting mutual search rights. As evidenced, as long as a single nation's flag afforded protection, slavers would flock to it.<sup>692</sup> Aberdeen's suggestion in December 1841 that the British were willing to be held liable and pay damages for visits to *bona fide* American vessels paved the way for a denouement.<sup>693</sup> In 1842, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty was signed. Although Britain did not explicitly rescind its claimed right of visit, it discontinued the practice (Britain finally admitted that they had no legal claim to this right in 1856.<sup>694</sup>). The US, in exchange, agreed to keep a squadron off the African coast in order to better control the use of its flag. This did not matter much because developments would hint that that the British simply squared the circle here.

The effectiveness of the Webster-Ashburton treaty depended on the number of cruisers the Americans dispatched to the coast. Never exceeding five, the fraudulent use of the American flag persisted.<sup>695</sup> The mutual search right conundrum had not been resolved.

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<sup>691</sup> Consistent with their practices begun a few years earlier, British cruisers visiting vessels flying the American flag off the coast of Africa to ascertain their nationality found that many were actually Portuguese or Spanish. See Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 254.

<sup>692</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 48.

<sup>693</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 256.

<sup>694</sup> Ibid.

<sup>695</sup> Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention.*, p. 189 and Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 257.

Eventually, fortuitous events would serve as a catalyst to finally resolve the matter. With the coming to power of Abraham Lincoln, existing US anti-slave trade laws began being enforced. At the outbreak of the US Civil War, the redeployment of American cruisers from the African coast to the Civil War effort left the US president with few choices. In a bid to continue combating the trade and averting the potential of Britain backing the South in the US Civil War, Lincoln conceded to a treaty which included mutual search rights.<sup>696</sup>

By the early 40s, at Britain's instigation, 35 years after beginning its quest to internationalize its own domestic trade ban, all significant maritime powers engaged in the transatlantic slave trade had legally abolished the traffic and, with the exception of the US, had conceded search rights to suppress it. The new understandings regarding the illegitimacy of the slave trade propagated by British antislavery organizations and adopted by the British government had been disseminated internationally by the British authorities. The persistence of the transatlantic trade after this period had more to do with the practical difficulties of enforcement and suppression (mainly because of unresolved matters on the US front).

Fortuitous events in the 1850s also gave the British an opportunity to definitively suppress the irritating and illegal persistence of the Brazilian trade. A growing segment of 'native' Brazilians resented the wealthy and mainly Portuguese class that wielded political power in Brazil. These were the same people that were engaged in the slave trade. Palmerston engaged the British navy to (illegally) chase slavers into Brazilian territorial waters, to destroy coastal barracoons owned by slavers and to even go on expeditions into the interior.<sup>697</sup> Although the Brazilian authorities sent notes of protests, the Brazilian legislature indirectly supported British actions by finally ratifying, in 1850, an article of the 1826

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<sup>696</sup> Kern, "Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.", p. 257 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 20.

<sup>697</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement.*, pp. 183-184, Kaufmann and Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 659 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 182.

British-Brazilian slave trade treaty making the trade piracy. This facilitated and legalized some of the British initiatives. From 23,000 in 1850, slave imports to Brazil virtually ceased by 1853.<sup>698</sup> Palmerston's actions in Brazil also served a domestic purpose. It put to rest the contentious anti-coercionist challenge that had gathered considerable steam in Britain. Palmerston and PM Russell were chiefly responsible for staving off this challenge.<sup>699</sup> In 1853, a Commons Committee unanimously endorsed the continuation of suppression policies.

### The Nail in the Coffin and Decline

For various reasons, the 1850s marked the beginning of a relative decline for the British antislavery movement. Most notably, the zeal demonstrated by earlier generations of abolitionists was now absent. In many respects this was attributable to some of the successes achieved by the earlier generations. The average annual number of slaves crossing the Atlantic went from 135,000 in the 1835-40 period to 7,000 in the 1853-56 time frame;<sup>700</sup> slavery was abolished in Britain's eastern possessions; apart from issues with the US flag and Cuba, the transatlantic trade was being legally suppressed; France, Denmark and Sweden had abolished slavery and the abolition of slavery was a major political issue in the US. Even though numerous objectives remained elusive, the appropriateness of the slave trade and slavery had now become practically indefensible in Britain. The following affirmation by Temperley drives home the arguments made in the current (and previous) chapter; "What had begun as the seemingly impractical proposals of a few eccentrics had become the subject of

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<sup>698</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 183.

<sup>699</sup> Only under threats of resignation by PM Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston was an 1850 motion – considered a test of confidence – requesting the beginning of international negotiations to free Britain from its obligations to maintain the African Squadron defeated. Coupland., p. 182, Mathieson., p. 106 and Temperley., p. 182.

<sup>700</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 231.

grave legislative deliberations and had now attained the status of unquestioned assumptions.”<sup>701</sup>

Consequently, antislavery activities were comparatively marginal in the 1850s. Issues included the familiarization with Turkish slavery; native servitude in Africa; the French *Emigré* system; an increase in indentured labour to the West Indies in the late 50s; the Cuban slave trade and American slavery.<sup>702</sup> The breaking out of hostilities in the US in 1861 breathed some life into the movement. However, there was a realization that the most that the British could do to contribute at this stage of the American struggle was to continue to denounce slavery and support American abolitionists. Even this was sometimes seen as counterproductive. American proslavery groups had gone to some lengths in the 40s to represent abolitionism as a foreign – namely British – import that stood to tear the Union apart.<sup>703</sup> The fact that antislavery internationalization objectives had been taken up by the national authorities and had become well entrenched in British foreign policy by the 1860s, also contributed to the declining vigour of the movement.

Effective suppression and elimination of the transatlantic trade finally materialized in the mid 60s. As part of the Washington treaty signed with the US in April 1862, mutual search rights were finally convened. With the US’ active cooperation in suppression efforts, by 1865, blockade running became virtually impossible. The last bastion of the transatlantic slave trade was now obliterated and the only transatlantic nations still tolerating slavery were Brazil, Portugal and Spain.<sup>704</sup> Given the effective suppression measures that were now in

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<sup>701</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>702</sup> Ibid., pp. 233-237.

<sup>703</sup> Lewis Tappan, a leading American abolitionist had once intimated that the best way to get things done in the US was to make it known that British abolitionists were opposed to it. Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>704</sup> France had abolished in 1848, Holland 1863 and the US 1865. Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention.*, p. 161, Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World.*, p. 238, Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", p. 241 and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics.*, chapter VIII.

place, supply became a challenge; Portugal would eventually abolish slavery in 1869, while Spain and Brazil would follow suit in 1886 and 1888 respectively.

### The Turn to Africa and the East and Contemporary Links

In 1867, after delegates heard Dr. David Livingstone (the famous Scottish medical missionary and explorer) speak about Africa at an antislavery convention in Paris, the British movement was revived.<sup>705</sup> The centre of attention was about to shift to Africa (east coast and interior) and the east.<sup>706</sup> The thesis will explore this and ensuing chapters of the global antislavery struggle in chapters five and six. The conclusion of the current chapter marks the end of the portion of the thesis that sought to demonstrate the benefit of adopting a practice oriented approach to elucidate change – or the reasonable inclination of the discontinuity camp to invoke an historical disjuncture.

To briefly recap, the conditioning element of extant Quaker and Evangelical practices and beliefs facilitated the import of non-conformist reflections, deliberations and arguments about the illegitimacy of slavery into the political sphere. On the basis of the transposition of extant practice templates familiar to these groups in other fields of activity, non-conformist groups waged a domestic battle to get the British authorities to ban the slave trade and chattel slavery (within the empire). They succeeded in fomenting a generalized antislavery fervour in Britain. In turn, with the continued activities and vigilance of antislavery organizations, antislavery objectives were taken up by the British authorities in internationalization efforts. Eventually, antislavery internationalization policies became entrenched in British foreign policy. Facilitated by its status as a premier power, Britain used various forms of leverage to become the leading catalyst in inspiring an international antislavery trend – as illustrated by

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<sup>705</sup> Andreas and Nadleemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations.*, pp. 28-29 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 25.

<sup>706</sup> Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress.*, p. xvii and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, pp. 24-25.

the monumental efforts the British invested in eliminating the transatlantic trade (and by extension, transatlantic slavery). The trend eventually led to the global prohibition of slavery.

In assessing the merits of the positions of the discontinuity camp, it is difficult to gainsay that invoking a historical disjuncture to characterize the achievements of the antislavery movement is unreasonable. The ubiquity and capacity of the practice of slavery to adapt and persist – for millennia in various geographical quarters – through a host of historical-intellectual shifts and evolutions (surveyed in Chapter One) was, after all, effectively overturned in the span of approximately two centuries. In terms of its practical effects, the delegitimization of slavery eventually led to substantive practical changes, namely the near universal elimination of chattel slavery (the legal ability to own, use at one's convenience, and sell human beings). Therefore, the central puzzle that this thesis is trying to address does not necessarily stem from invoking a disjuncture, which seems reasonable and justified. Rather, the problem originates from endowing the disjuncture with a terminal quality. Or, in Quirk's words, treating the disjuncture as an endpoint.

Overemphasizing the rupture leads to relegating the practices of slavery to the category of historical artefact. This in turn leads to treating persisting and/or evolving slavery practices as somewhat anomalous, different and/or novel. Characterizations like modern and/or contemporary forms of slavery ensue – representations that, as we shall see, are somewhat misleading. As chapters five and six will illustrate, a practice oriented approach can help further specify and elucidate, from a theoretical standpoint, what Quirk's work aptly illustrates. Namely, that the rupture between traditional and contemporary forms of slavery is an artifice that a practice focus can bridge. The artefactization of slavery that results from endowing the historical disjuncture with a terminal quality obscures the fact that some of these so called contemporary forms of slavery pre-dated antislavery and global abolition and persist to this day. Or, it obscures the fact that some of the practices characterized as modern

incarnations are practices that have evolved/mutated in response to the limitations of the qualitatively different form that abolition and the antislavery battle took in the non-European/transatlantic phase of the struggle. The two final chapters of the thesis will turn to elucidating these claims.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Externalization and Internationalization: Challenges in the Non-Transatlantic European Realm**

### Linking to the Contemporary

Chapter Four concluded our examination of how a practice approach can help us better understand the unfolding of the European delegitimization of a normalized and ubiquitous millennia old human institution within approximately two and a half centuries (discontinuity representations). In chapters five and six, we will look at the second half of the equation. Namely, how a practice theoretical foil can also help us better comprehend how the continuing internationalization of antislavery (and abolition) beyond the European transatlantic area can facilitate tracking evolutions in bondage practices – and demonstrate how these developments connect to contemporary forms of slavery (continuity representations).

European colonization was, of course, not a new phenomenon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its first wave was already afoot since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, as of the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., it would enter its second wave. This implied a heightened level of activity within evolving international circumstances. The resulting dynamic of the clashing practices of variegated native bondage practices, antislavery and (increased) colonization and rivalry conditioned the course of the post-transatlantic phases of the antislavery struggle. Transformations flowing from these developments contributed to the growth and expansion and/or mutation of forms of bondage that can be linked to (or evolved into) contemporary forms of slavery.

The Indian model of emancipation (and its impacts on extant forms of debt bondage) represents an early and pivotal illustration of some of these processes. It serves to highlight and preview the salience of how clashing practices (variegated native bondage practices, colonization and antislavery) are accentuated by audience issues. Underlining the limitations of this model of emancipation also illustrates how negotiating, navigating and trying to reconcile the clashing practices and audience issues in question provided the openings seized

upon to transform and expand historical forms of debt bondage in response to abolition (debt bondage, concentrated in the Indian subcontinent, is currently considered the most expansive and problematic form of contemporary slavery on the planet). Similar patterns and processes of abolition in Africa and the east (often based on instituting and implementing variations of the Indian template) were evident and led to analogous developments that contributed to the expansion and transformation (and rationalization) of other forms of servitude; forms which eventually also evolved and came to be encompassed within the category of contemporary forms of slavery. The intensification of the heightened rivalry and competition between European powers during the second wave of colonization – in the form of the scramble for Africa – created, compounded and broadened the types of *problématiques* evidenced in the Indian case.

In light of these observations, the current chapter will begin with an examination of how the navigations and machinations involved in negotiating and reconciling the clashing practices of colonization, antislavery and variegated forms of local bondage (spurred on by audience issues) conditioned the way slavery was abolished on the Indian subcontinent. In turn, the probe will then illustrate how the limitations of this model provided the openings that were seized upon to transform and expand historical forms of debt bondage in response to abolition. The second section of the chapter will then review the evolving circumstances that shaped the post-transatlantic phases of the internationalization of the antislavery struggle. These phases were enmeshed in and conditioned by practices encompassed in the expansion and dominance of European international society. This review will facilitate tracking (in the next chapter) the continuation of how the sets of clashing practices and audience issues outlined thus far (variegated forms of native bondage, colonization and antislavery) responded and evolved within the changing landscape of heightened colonization and rivalry. This will help set the backdrop to explain patterns of how abolition unfolded and was

deployed in these areas, and how responses to the limitations of these deployments provided the openings to facilitate the continuation, expansion and/or transformation and development of other forms of servitude – forms that are, one again, connected to modern bondage practices.

### Debt Bondage: Transcending the Artifice

In discussions relating to the various activities grouped under the rubric of contemporary forms of slavery, debt bondage is catalogued as being the most problematic and expansive.<sup>707</sup> Debt bondage is defined by the ILO as a situation in which a worker “renders service under conditions of bondage arising from economic considerations, notably indebtedness through a loan or advance. Where debt is the root cause of the bondage, the implication is that the worker (or dependents or heirs) is tied to a particular creditor for a specified or unspecified period until the loan is repaid.”<sup>708</sup> Traditionally, desperation and helplessness have led (or lead) individuals to contracting the loans or advances. Thanks to various factors like poor wages and creative accounting (among others), the predicament of bonded labourers often becomes perpetual and even hereditary.<sup>709</sup>

Of the 27 million people that Bales inventoried as engaged in various forms of contemporary slavery (in 1999), the majority – 10 to 15 million – were classified as bonded labourers on the Indian subcontinent.<sup>710</sup> For the ILO, the Asia-Pacific region accounts for 9.5 million of its total estimated number of 12.3 million people engaged in various forms of

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<sup>707</sup> Other forms of modern/contemporary forms of slavery include trafficking in persons, child labour, forced labour, wartime enslavement and the severe exploitation of migrants and domestic workers. Quirk, "Modern Slavery.", p. 331 and ———, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery.*, p. 102.

<sup>708</sup> ILO, "Stopping Forced Labour: Global Report under the Follow-up to the Ilo Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Report of the Director General, 2001," (2001)., p. 32.

<sup>709</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, pp. 195-196.

<sup>710</sup> Bonded labourers in India and Pakistan account for nearly 75 percent of his total estimate. Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy.*, pp. 8-9.

forced labour (of which they assert 40 to 50 percent are children).<sup>711</sup> In contrast to these lower end estimates, Human Rights Watch claims that there are 40 million bonded labourers in India alone.<sup>712</sup> Assessing the merits and accuracy of the varying estimates, along with their respective definitions and methodologies, is not the primary concern here. Rather, what is significant is the fact that, far from being novel and/or a modern phenomenon, debt bondage was a relatively ubiquitous historical form of bondage that had existed (alongside other forms) for millennia across geographical space.<sup>713</sup>

A closer look at the antislavery practices adopted by the British authorities in their colonial jurisdiction of India reveals how the limitations of the way slavery was abolished there (along with ensuing colonial institutional and economic developments) had a profound incidence on the increase and transformation – and continuing persistence – of debt bondage on the subcontinent. Following legal abolition, the conditioning effects of clashing practices like colonialism, antislavery, bondage and caste systems<sup>714</sup> – some of which were hardened over millennia by the material configurations associated with these practices – led to adjustments that ended up facilitating the adaptation and expansion of bonded labour. By producing an account of antislavery practices within the larger contextual factors involved, the Indian model of abolition and emancipation illustrates how a practice focus can help bridge the dichotomous positions held by the discontinuity and continuity frames erected in this thesis. The case captures the intricacies of continuity within change and represents a useful microcosm of the larger patterns that led to the abolition – and evolution – of slavery on a global scale.

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<sup>711</sup> Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", p. 253.

<sup>712</sup> Smita Narula and Human Rights Watch, *Broken People: Caste Violence against India's "Untouchables"* (Human Rights Watch, 1999)., p. 139.

<sup>713</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, pp. 193-195 .

<sup>714</sup> Debt bondage in the Indian subcontinent disproportionately affects individuals of lower caste. Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", p. 255.

The Indian case also underlines the salience of audience issues; it illustrates how, through the process of the dissemination of practices that could potentially endow others with similar dispositions enabling transformation, we can develop richer accounts of outcomes by analyzing ensuing contestations and alterations. The case facilitates the reconnection of the contemporary to the historical. It helps to further denaturalize notions that slavery is an historical artefact by illustrating that contemporary variants like debt bondage are not novel or simple vestiges of slavery; they are historically mediated and path dependent sets of evolving activities that can be linked to past antislavery successes and limitations.<sup>715</sup> Therefore, the Indian case serves as fertile ground to illustrate the added value of adopting a practice oriented approach to the study of continuity and change (or continuity within change).

#### Slavery and Social Hierarchy/Dependency

Slavery and bondage did not signify the same things to the authorities and populations of colonial India (and arguably, other non-European territories and European colonies) as they did to the British (and other Europeans). Consistent with the external pressures branch of Quirk's tripartite division to understand and explain how antislavery principles were disseminated and instituted, the pressure to abolish slavery on the subcontinent came from without.<sup>716</sup> It was driven by abolitionists pressuring the British parliament to remedy a matter which was left outside the scope of the 1833 British Emancipation Act.<sup>717</sup> Therefore, the key to understanding the impacts and limitations of legal abolition in relation to the morphing and persistence of debt bondage on the Indian subcontinent originates in audience issues.

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<sup>715</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 194.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid., pp. 55, 64-66 and 80-81.

<sup>717</sup> Abolitionists' belated take-up of the Indian case was spurred on by the realization that the number of slaves present in colonial India was twenty times higher than the number freed by the 1833 Emancipation Act and four times higher than the total slave population of the New World. Howard Temperley, "The Delegalization of Slavery in British India," in *After Slavery: Emancipation and Its Discontents*, ed. Howard Temperley (London: Frank Cass, 2000)., p. 177.

The incongruence stems from British (and European) conceptualizations of labour and freedom; these were primarily rooted in and coloured by experiences with transatlantic chattel slavery and ran up against other well entrenched notions and practices on the subcontinent. The transformation and expansion of the practice of debt bondage on the subcontinent can therefore be explained in terms of the complex adjustments that resulted from the navigation and negotiation of the differences between the well-entrenched notions and practices of a range of stakeholders. Or, the evolution of debt bondage on the Indian subcontinent can be explained by a gap in terms of the existence of a group membership characterized by mutual intelligibility and susceptibility in identifying, sustaining and assessing shared antislavery practices.<sup>718</sup>

#### Abolishing Slavery in India: Vacillations and Vicissitudes

The 1833 British Emancipation Act applied to the West Indies, Mauritius, Canada and the Cape of Good Hope. The act was/is routinely – and erroneously – cited as having abolished slavery within the empire. The reality however is that the Act primarily targeted areas within the empire in which Europeans were the proprietors of non-European chattel slaves; a predicament and system that was created, pioneered and perfected by Europeans.<sup>719</sup> In contrast, during its colonial expansion, Great Britain inherited varying types of indigenous bondage practices that were present and evolving on the Indian subcontinent (and elsewhere) since antiquity. As a general rule, these practices rested on very divergent social and

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<sup>718</sup> The concept of group membership with these capacities and attributes emanates from a larger theoretical debate about the existence of shared practices. See Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action.", Turner, *The Social Theory of Practices: Tradition, Tacit Knowledge, and Presuppositions*. and ———, "Throwing out the Tacit Rule Book: Learning and Practices."

<sup>719</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 93. Hurwitz argues that the West Indies took precedence because it was a realm in which Britain contributed to the establishment and perpetuation of slavery, whereas slavery was already present in India when the British arrived there. Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist Movement in Britain.*, p. 73.

economic realities in which enslaved and enslavers were of the same ilk<sup>720</sup> (in stark contrast to slavery in the Americas).

Rather than exhibiting the capitalistic characteristics of transatlantic chattel slavery in which a lack of population and labour combined with unexploited resources to create a system mainly driven by profit motives, the east had an inverse predicament; in general, it had abundant populations with insufficient resources to exploit.<sup>721</sup> Consequently, in contrast to the American model, slavery in the east had non-monetary dimensions. For example, in India, rather than primarily stemming from economic considerations, bonded labour systems were one element among many that were rooted in larger patterns of social hierarchy and/or dependency.<sup>722</sup> In conditions of caste structures, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, endemic poverty and recurring famine, slavery on the subcontinent was often the result of ‘voluntary’ or ‘quasi-voluntary’ arrangements arising from peoples’ recognition that they were better off as bondsmen than as landless freemen.<sup>723</sup> There was often a symbiotic relationship between masters and slaves. For slaves, in many instances, various forms of bondage provided a vital survival strategy. Being a bondsperson insured a rudimentary provision of needs despite caste, endemic poverty, recurring natural calamities and economic cycles. For masters, owning slaves not only made life easier; it was also a sign of prosperity and standing. The prospect of monetary returns was often a secondary consideration. A good example of this type of symbiosis was the sale or gift of children and wives (or selves) during times of periodic famines. The ‘choice’ was between letting loved ones (or one’s self) die of

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<sup>720</sup> Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.", p. 57, Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 94 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 199.

<sup>721</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 94-96.

<sup>722</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 196. This reality was conveniently used by various authorities and detractors of antislavery to justify and rationalize these practices as a step up from the chattel variant of slavery. Apologists often characterized these practices as “benign” forms of servitude. Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, pp. 95-96 and Quirk, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.", p. 546.

<sup>723</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 95 and Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.", pp. 54-56.



hunger and/or exposure, or entrusting them to someone who was better off to insure their survival.<sup>724</sup>

In general terms, various differing conditions and realities of this type meant that slavery came in a variety of forms outside the Americas; forms that were usually enmeshed in larger patterns of social hierarchy and/or social dependency. In order to sketch how this assertion applied to the Indian subcontinent, it would be useful to briefly recap some elements about the history slavery in the IOW that were covered in Chapter Two. In the IOW, the labour force required to maintain and operate sophisticated irrigation based agriculture was often secured by turning war captives into agricultural slaves. Another substantive segment of slaves ended up in bondage through debt. As opposed to what is commonly understood as debt bondage, this type of slavery through indebtedness was not entered into voluntarily as a credit securing mechanism; it was imposed as a form of punishment for defaulting on debt. It is true that those that entered into voluntary debt bondage arrangements outnumbered slaves; however, through various means used by creditors, their debts increased and their servitude became perpetual (in most cases hereditary). This made them indistinguishable from individuals forced into bondage.<sup>725</sup>

Kidnapping and enslavement as legal punishment for crimes were also used as means to bind. Of particular significance is the fact that slaves were used for a variety of functions in different sectors including administration, agriculture, crafts, commerce, transport, military, security, domestic work, entertainment and sexual services. A minority of slaves could trade and amass wealth, gain prominence and influence through government service, or become

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<sup>724</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 96 and Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.", pp. 55-56. As Quirk explains, in a situation when viable employment alternatives are hard to come by, people lack bargaining power. In extreme cases, when desperate individuals volunteer to become slaves as a survival strategy, the language of 'free choice' is "stretched to the point of incoherence." Even after legal abolition, the lack of viable livelihood alternatives often resulted in the maintenance of masters' privileges; it facilitated slaves' reversion to bondage. Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, pp. 119-124.

<sup>725</sup> Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.", pp. 54-56 and 60.

highly assimilated and integrated in their masters' households and local society. This reality highlights a noteworthy distinction between the IOW and the American (and other) models of plantation slavery; namely, that slaves in the IOW had a varying gradation of traditional and prescribed rights that were sometimes upheld in law (most notably in Islamic societies). As opposed to a perpetual state of forced servitude, in certain cases, bondsmen could – with certain caveats – conceivably move up and down the hierarchy of differing forms of slavery or could even migrate from the legal status of slave to freeman and back.<sup>726</sup> This brief outline is reflective of the complex and multilayered reality of servitude on the Indian subcontinent.<sup>727</sup> As Temperley notes, “The problem of dealing with these forms of slavery was made even more difficult by the lack of an effective legal system. Judges and other British functionaries found themselves contending not only with the vague and often conflicting injunctions of Muslim and Hindu law but also with a bewildering variety of local practices which differed from province to province and even from village to village.”<sup>728</sup>

As early as 1833, as the old East India Charter was about to expire, Charles Grey's government attempted to tackle these challenges within the drafting of a new charter. Just one week before the Emancipation Bill was introduced, the new draft charter received its first reading in Parliament. In relation to slavery, in its original form, the new charter was more radical than the Emancipation Bill. Unlike the initial Emancipation Bill which provided compensation for slave-owners and called for a gradualist approach granting full freedom in twelve years, the new East India Charter contained no compensation provisions and called for

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<sup>726</sup> Ibid., pp. 59-61 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 96. Miers has also made the same type of distinction for the African case. See Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, chapter 3 and ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 32. However, slaves were still considered the legal property of their owners. Strict obedience was demanded and ensured by the ever present threat and/or use of violence, and sexual abuse and harsh treatment were common. Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, pp. 195-196. and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, pp. 87 and 97-98.

<sup>727</sup> Quirk, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.", p. 546.

<sup>728</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 98 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 197.

the abolition of slavery throughout the East India Company's territories by April 1837. However, as a result of abolitionists' prioritization and focus on the Emancipation Bill and the West Indies, during successive readings, the slavery components of the new East India Charter were watered down; a specific date by which slavery was to be abolished was removed and the burden of addressing slavery on the subcontinent was shifted onto the Indian authorities.<sup>729</sup>

Once the new charter received Royal Assent in August 1833, it took nearly a decade to achieve any substantive progress on slavery in India. The main impediment to progress came from the colonial authorities. A brief review of the events during this period illustrates the fact that colonial authorities in India were not disposed or pressed to enact (and later enforce) antislavery practices and measures. As far as slavery was concerned, colonial authorities and the centre lacked common ground in terms of mutual intelligibility and susceptibility in identifying, sustaining and assessing shared antislavery practices. The resistance to the dissemination of the antislavery practices of the centre was evident in the indifference that colonial functionaries generally demonstrated vis a vis slavery matters. The apathy was a function of the colonial authorities' overriding desire not to cause significant social upheaval and economic dislocation. Part of the equation here was that various forms of bondage in existence on the subcontinent were still considered legitimate by native leaders and populations. The lethargy and recurrent delays culminated in a ten year bureaucratic muddle.<sup>730</sup> The final outcome was Act V of 1843; an act that was shaped by the decade long vacillations. As we shall see shortly, as a consequence of these circumstances, the act adopted a peculiar approach to abolishing slavery in colonial India. Some of the limitations of this approach, coupled with ensuing colonial institutional and economic changes, laid the foundation for the transformation and expansion of debt bondage on the subcontinent.

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<sup>729</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>730</sup> ———, "The Delegalization of Slavery in British India.", pp. 181-183.

The scheme that was eventually adopted in the 1833 East India Charter called on the Indian government in Delhi (the Governor General and a council of three) to elaborate a draft slavery act that would be submitted to the Court of Directors in London. Once the Court approved the act, it would be sent back to Delhi for implementation (with suggested amendments). A letter of instruction informed Delhi of Parliament's intentions in December 1834.<sup>731</sup> As a first step, Delhi suggested that the matter be referred to the Indian Law Commission, which had just begun an inquiry into Indian legal practices. The objective of the Law Commissioners was to draft a single and inclusive criminal code for the whole of India. The suggestion was greeted warmly by the Court of Directors in London. Given the Law Commission's objective, the timing and coincidence seemed compatible and complimentary. Three years later however, nothing had been relayed to the Court of Directors in London. Upon the Court's relatively stern reminder to Delhi in August 1838, it was revealed that the Indian authorities had not yet given any instructions about the matter to the Law Commission. Only when the Court forwarded its latest dispatch to the Commission directly (in November 1838) were the Commissioners apprised of the subject. At this stage, on the ostensible grounds of the urgency of the subject, Delhi refused to give the Commissioners consent to conduct local inquiries. Therefore, on the basis of the considerable amount of data already gathered for their main purposes, the Law Commission finally started working on a new report in December 1838.<sup>732</sup>

In the interim, the Commission's first draft of a proposed penal code for India had already arrived in London. One particular recommendation caught the attention of the Court of Directors. It stated that "no act which would be an offence if done against a free person be exempted from punishment because it is done against a slave."<sup>733</sup> Given that this was exactly

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<sup>731</sup> ———, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 100

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

the type of thing that Parliament was impatiently waiting for in order to assuage the antislavery lobby, in September 1838, before awaiting a response to their stern reminder sent to Delhi a month earlier – and before the Commissioners were notified of the subject – the Court of Directors approved the recommendation and sent word to Governor General Auckland to pass corresponding legislation. Auckland was sceptical and pointed out – erroneously – that the existing penal law already acknowledged the principle that slave and master should be on the same footing regarding offences. To no avail, the subsequent bureaucratic dispute saw the question bandied about between the Law Commissioners and provincial administrations in Madras and Bombay.<sup>734</sup> By the end of 1840, nothing further had been accomplished.

Abolitionists in England were getting impatient.<sup>735</sup> After a number of failed assurances at different junctures that the Law Commission's report on slavery was forthcoming, as of 1840, activists resorted to what had become their usual agitation tactics: publications, meetings, appearances, pleas to electors and waiting on key politicians. After meeting with recently elected Prime Minister Peel and the President of the India Board (Lord Ellenborough) in 1841, things started moving. The Law Commissioners' report had finally arrived in April 1841. It contained thirty-three recommendations and had a gradualist tone. Rather than substantive changes, it advocated measures to ameliorate some of the system's harsher aspects.<sup>736</sup> While it was under review, the Indian authorities resorted to further delay by sending a dispatch to London stating that they remained undecided about the matter and would be grateful if that the matter could be regarded as still under their consideration. After initially acquiescing, in September, Lord Ellenborough sent a secret dispatch to Auckland

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<sup>734</sup> Ibid.

<sup>735</sup> The matter was not simply about the continuation of slavery within the Empire. Leading abolitionists like James Cropper were advocating the removal of all impediments to the free labour production of tropical produce in the East as a means to undercut the competitiveness of the slave economies of the West. The British India Society was created in 1839 to facilitate this task. Ibid., pp. 101-102. For more on Cropper see Davis, "James Cropper and the British Anti-Slavery Movement, 1823-1833."

<sup>736</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 105.

cautioning that a massive agitation campaign was being prepared in England.<sup>737</sup> Three weeks later (in October 1841), the Court of Directors sent an even blunter official dispatch cautioning that

...any delay in complying with the intention of Parliament and the people of this country, might lead to some act of hurried and imperfect legislation, which adopted under feelings of excitement and without the local knowledge and information you possess, might have consequences injurious to the public peace and tending to defeat the benevolent designs of its promoters.<sup>738</sup>

The Indian government finally started drafting regulations. However, the process stalled once again by the middle of January 1842. The Governor General and his Council could not agree on the question of allowing or disallowing masters a right to inflict moderate corporal punishment on their slaves. The matter was referred back to the Court of Directors in London. After a failed bid to curry enough Parliamentary support to try and circumvent the East India Charter and impose abolition via legislation from London, abolitionists pressed the government into action in late 1842/early 1843. In the form of an ostensible reply to the Governor General's referral on the corporal punishment question (which was now nearly a year removed), the Court of Directors sent a more general response addressing the whole of the matter of slavery in India. The Court sided with Indian Councilmember William Wilberforce Bird<sup>739</sup> endorsing a liberal approach to the matter. However, as an accommodation for some of the stability oriented concerns that colonial authorities had, Act V adopted a bit of a legalistic side-wind.<sup>740</sup> Rather than instituting an outright prohibition of slavery with attending punishments for violations, the Act forbade the courts from conferring

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<sup>737</sup> Ibid.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid.

<sup>739</sup> One of William Wilberforce's cousin's sons.

<sup>740</sup> In concordance with the Indian Law Commission's gradualist report and recommendations, the colonial authorities wanted to incrementally phase out slavery. They deemed this a safer course that would not cause significant social upheaval and economic dislocation and would, in the long run, also be in the best interest of slaves.

the status of slavery with formal legal recognition.<sup>741</sup> In other words, slavery no longer had legal standing. The nuance is highly important because it shifted the onus on slaves to claim their freedom and to resort to the courts in contentious matters arising from the provisions of Act V. If slaves left their masters, they (in theory) could not be legally recovered or made to work; however, it was not illegal to own slaves. The logical corollary was that those who remained slaves did so voluntarily.<sup>742</sup>

Initially, the passing and existence of the Act was not publicized; even if it would have been, two major impediments stood in the way for slaves to avail themselves of the opportunity to claim their liberty in front of the courts. First, the large majority of slaves were not familiar with the law and the legal system. Even if they would have been, the majority did not have the resources to call upon the courts. Second, even if this first impediment were to be removed, alternative options to earn a living were not exactly abundant.<sup>743</sup> In essence, the legalistic side-wind stacked the odds against slaves; following the institution of Act V, the situation remained similar to the status quo ante. As Temperley has noted, "Indian slavery had never depended to any great extent on judicial sanctions, being largely the product of customs...From the point of view of the Indian administrator, the new act had much to commend it, for being essentially negative it required virtually no enforcement and actually relieved him of some responsibility."<sup>744</sup> Miers has gone further in asserting that "It was cheap. It caused no discernible social or economic disruption, produced no political backlash, and

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<sup>741</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 99 and 199, ———, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.", p. 546 and Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*., p. 157.

<sup>742</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*., pp. 30-31 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., pp. 119-124.

<sup>743</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 99.

<sup>744</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870*., p. 107. See also ———, "The Delegalization of Slavery in British India.", pp. 183-186. The Indian model of emancipation, as it came to be commonly known, set an important precedent and was used as a template and applied in other colonial jurisdictions. It held two distinctive advantages. It gave the perception that authorities were not complacent about slavery; all the while, it maintained, in practice, masters' privileges (even if the law no longer recognized slavery as a legal status). Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 116 and ———, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.", p. 545.

required no special measures of enforcement.”<sup>745</sup> Only later economic, legal and institutional changes under colonial rule bestowed Act V with some clout.<sup>746</sup> Economic expansion in the form of the building of railways, public works, the establishment of urban trades and industry, and the possibility of serving in the armed forces or leaving India as indentured labourers gave slaves alternative livelihood options that allowed them to assert a minimal measure of independence to claim their liberty.<sup>747</sup>

### Maladroit Transposition/Imposition and Adaptation

As a result of Act V of 1843 and the ensuing economic, legal and institutional changes in India, the boundaries of what constituted slavery on the subcontinent were gradually rearranged. The maladroit transposition of various British practices, which corresponded poorly with local realities and practices, led to the separation and redefinition of debt bondage as being distinct from slavery. As Quirk affirms, it is in this sense that “modern forms of bonded labour can be at least partially traced to complex adjustments to colonial policies surrounding the legal abolition of slavery.”<sup>748</sup> Rather than creating a novel and/or different form of slavery, the adjustments in question reshaped and gave new breadth to an ancient and longstanding form of bondage. In order to address how clumsy British impositions affected debt bondage practices – and how these effects connect to contemporary practices – one needs to apprehend the discrepancies between British and local practices (and realities).

As Orlando Patterson has argued, freedom, belonging and social hierarchy did not mean the same things to audiences in India as they did to the British (or other Europeans).

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<sup>745</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 31.

<sup>746</sup> And facilitated the coming of ensuing legislation in 1860/61 introducing criminal penal sanctions for trading and holding slaves – which also proved largely ineffectual. Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 199 and ———, “Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.”, p. 546.

<sup>747</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 108 and Quirk, “Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.”, p. 546. As Quirk points out “this frequently meant changing one objectionable situation for another.” ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 200.

<sup>748</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 194 and 198.



Patterson's provocatively posited that for non-western peoples, western interpretations of freedom and belonging were secluding and conducive to vulnerability and precariousness.<sup>749</sup> This concurs well with Gwyn Campbell's assertions that within the varying gradation of traditional and prescribed rights that slaves held in the IOW, the goal was not necessarily personal freedom (in the western sense of the term). Rather, the objective was the obtainment of a more favourable position within the established social hierarchy.<sup>750</sup> The examples covered earlier of individuals entering into 'voluntary' or 'quasi-voluntary' states of bondage as a survival strategy or of landless freemen doing the same to improve their lot in life illustrate this point.<sup>751</sup> To reiterate, debt and bondage were elements rooted and comprised within larger patterns of social hierarchy and/or dependency. What is highly important here is the fact that the linchpin of this hierarchy was ingrained in relationships between people (or caste considerations).

Rather than heeding the realities outlined in the previous paragraph, in their struggle to categorize types of bondage that were unfamiliar to them in India, the British introduced what they considered as universal and taken-for-granted notions and practices regarding money and financial affairs (and how these items related to the British conceptualization of freedom). These precepts allowed for the re-conceptualization of bonded labourers as individuals, who, by virtue of their 'voluntary' financial behaviours and engagements, had compromised their personal liberty.<sup>752</sup> This explicitly contractual re-conceptualization allowed for a

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<sup>749</sup> See Orlando Patterson, *Freedom* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

<sup>750</sup> Gwyn Campbell, "Introduction: Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour in the Indian Ocean World," in *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, ed. Gwyn Campbell (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p. xxiii, Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.", pp. 56 and 60 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 95.

<sup>751</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 96.

<sup>752</sup> Here, Quirk uses Gyan Prakesh's work on kamias (a class of agricultural labourers) to illustrate some of these points. See Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 197. It is also noteworthy to underline here that before Act V made the status of slavery illegal in India, the British considered debt bondage slavery.

differentiation between a practice which until then was classified within the category of slavery, but hitherto became the distinct practice of bonded labour.

The redefinition was a consequence of the abolition of slavery (via Act V) and ensuing economic, institutional and legal changes. The sum of these evolving developments eventually led to new labour regulations. In 1859, the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act (or Act III) was instituted. It introduced penal sanctions that could be imposed on workers who were considered responsible for contractual breaches.<sup>753</sup> In a bid to retain their privileges and galvanize their authority, by making their bondsmen sign labour contracts, masters in parts of the subcontinent expediently took advantage of the new colonial institutions to redefine their relationships with their bondsmen.<sup>754</sup> Although the underlying goal was to preserve the status quo, the net effect of these developments altered the existing weights accorded to the nexus of land, people and labour within the caste system. As Gyan Prakesh has asserted, "land control replaced direct claims over people in determining the social relations of production. Whereas earlier, rights over land derived from relations between people, by the late nineteenth century, unequal control over land became the basis of social relations."<sup>755</sup>

Previous to this shift, in an environment where slaves and masters came from similar ethnic backgrounds, caste was the primary delineator of communal identity. As a general rule, masters came from higher castes while slaves were drawn from lower castes. However, within the variety of bondage types on the subcontinent, some slaves (a minority) were engaged in activities that brought them into frequent contact with their masters (like domestic servants, bodyguards, concubines, and administrators).<sup>756</sup> In order to avoid compromising masters' relative purity, functions fulfilled by these slaves could not be entrusted to the potentially

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<sup>753</sup> Ranajit D. Gupta, "Plantation Labour in Colonial India," in *Plantations, Proletarians and Peasants in Colonial Asia*, ed. Henry Bernstein, Tom Brass, and Daniel E. Valentine (London: Frank Cass, 1992), p. 181.

<sup>754</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*, p. 197.

<sup>755</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

corrupting attributes of lower castes. However, as a result of the shifting basis of social relations from associations between people to the financial and contractual framework imported and imposed by the British (and seized by masters to assert and galvanize their authority), new possibilities were generated for the transformation and expansion of debt bondage.

This shift in social relations can be understood as a form of resistance to change on the basis of longstanding and well entrenched local practices. In other words, the move could be construed as a bid to maintain larger societal conceptions and patterns of social hierarchy and dependency with caste structures serving as the primary driver defining and demarcating economic relations – as opposed to an inverse situation in which profits motives defined and demarcated economic relationships in the transatlantic variant of chattel slavery.<sup>757</sup> This is borne out by the way that individuals with a vested interest in the continuation of slavery tailored and utilized the imposition of the differing British notions and practices of money, finances and personal liberty to their ends. Paradoxically however, in an environment where suitable replacements were highly sought after as a result of developments following the legal abolition of slavery, the financial and contractual frameworks introduced by the British (and seized by those with a vested interest in preserving slavery) basically flattened the field and enlarged the potential pool of people that could now become bonded labourers.

Ultimately, colonial policies contributed to redefining debt bondage as distinct from slavery; this reworked conceptualization facilitated a shift in the underpinnings of bonded labour and reshaped patterns of dependency on the subcontinent. It simultaneously simplified the quest for suitable replacements while allowing the British to circumvent their antislavery commitments flowing from Act V. This was achieved by politically motivated rationalizations

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<sup>757</sup> This was not simply an economic matter. It was also a question of ingrained beliefs about social standing and hierarchy. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

that bonded labour represented a step up from slavery; the practice was characterized as an intermediate status between slavery and freedom.<sup>758</sup> In essence, after abolition (and ensuing economic and institutional changes), the British introduction of new legal and political standards facilitated Indian elites' reorganization of bondage activities around novel principles. The result was a transformation of the practices of bonded labour from a phenomenon defined by and arising from personal relationships between people (within caste structures) to one in which the practice acquired a market oriented commodification based on land. As Quirk asserts, "While bonded labour was not itself a new phenomenon, it gradually acquired new dimensions in response to various colonial institutional and economic pressures. The non-commercial functions that more privileged slaves had historically performed slowly faded from view, but bonded labour consolidated a major economic presence in many settings."<sup>759</sup> The delegitimization and legal abolition of slavery compelled certain stakeholders to – creatively – turn to related alternatives.

In efforts to internationalize antislavery and abolition in the African and eastern theatres, the Indian case represented a microcosm of larger international patterns. In order to facilitate tracking the progression of how the sets of clashing practices and audience issues outlined thus far were influenced by and evolved within heightened colonization and rivalry, the next section will provide a brief portrait of the evolving environmental conditions that conditioned the post-transatlantic phases of the internationalization of the antislavery struggle. This will help to set the backdrop to elucidate how patterns of analogous developments in Africa and elsewhere in the east contributed to the expansion and transformation (and rationalization) of other forms of servitude; forms, which, like debt bondage, also eventually evolved and came to be encompassed within the category of contemporary forms of slavery.

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<sup>758</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>759</sup> Quirk does caution that this process was not uniform. Although there were considerable variations over time in differing regions, he affirms that "an overarching trajectory can nevertheless be identified." Ibid., pp. 200-201.

Evolving Post-Transatlantic International Conditions

The transatlantic slave trade was effectively ended by the end of the 1860s and the institution of slavery in the Americas was legally abolished by the late 1880s when Brazil, the final holdout, abolished slavery in 1888. In the interim, even if Britain's primary focus was on the trade to the new world, British antislavery activities in Africa had been longstanding; within the confines of the transatlantic struggle, early activity on that continent had centred on cutting off supply.<sup>760</sup> As well, naval suppression efforts on the African coasts persisted throughout the antislavery struggle.<sup>761</sup> However, it quickly became clear that without the closing of destination markets, supply cut-off would have limited impacts. Once the main transatlantic destination markets were all but effectively closed in the late 1860s, Britain's primary antislavery focus was redirected towards Africa (eastern and interior) and the east. The turn was precipitated by the gathering and dissemination of evidence that brought to light the existence of thriving African slave exports to eastern markets.<sup>762</sup> By the 1880s, British efforts had yielded agreements to limit the trade with, among others, authorities in Zanzibar, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>763</sup> One significant consequence of relatively longstanding British antislavery efforts, agreements and policies was the establishment of British dominance on much of the African coast.

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<sup>760</sup> As early as 1780, Edmund Burke had included an African component in his slave code that was published in 1792; in 1787, Granville Sharp and two associates had suggested and begun the Sierra Leone experiment; from the very beginning of his abolitionist career, Thomas Clarkson had collected samples of African products (in his famous box of African wares) in order to promote commercial alternatives to the trade in slaves; the creation and objectives of the African Institution in 1807 had been premised on these same notions; and, although Thomas Buxton's Niger Delta expedition is one of the best known, it was neither the first nor the final expedition of its kind attempting to get to the African interior to promote trade and development. Treaties attempting to cut off supply were negotiated and signed with African rulers as early as 1817. See Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 40 and ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>761</sup> Britain only stopped patrolling the seas for slavers in 1939. Miers, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 210.

<sup>762</sup> A good example of this is Dr. David Livingstone's presentation at the BFASS organized 1867 Paris Anti-Slavery Convention. Andreas and Nadlemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations.*, pp. 28-29, Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, p. 25 and ———, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 197-198.

<sup>763</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 16-17 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 73.

The quest to eliminate the slave trade led to the pursuit and expansion of legitimate commerce in Africa, the protection of British subjects there and efforts to prevent various territories from falling under the protection of rival powers. These were all elements that paved the way for the ‘scramble for Africa’ (a matter that will be explored in Chapter Six). Crawford points to the irony that international cooperation to suppress the slave trade facilitated African colonization.<sup>764</sup> The irony is well encapsulated by Davis when he states that “emancipators can be as coercive and oppressive, in subtle ways, as enslavers. It was not the enslavers who colonized and subjugated Africa, but the European liberators.”<sup>765</sup> Notions of the “white man’s burden”, benevolence and religious missionary zeal spurred on the implementation of paternalistic measures and this imperialistic race.<sup>766</sup> These and other elements leads Miers to conclude that the shift to the African theatre prompted a reversion to more traditional territorial and national interests guiding foreign policy. The claim is that humanitarian questions were often subordinated to and subsumed under other interests, and were used as instruments to achieve objectives when they dovetailed well with other ends.<sup>767</sup> Often, Miers argues, territorial and national interests were pursued under the guise of the suppression of the slave trade/slavery; she asserts that this was the reason that the British Parliament was “more willing to sanction high-handed action and provide money for measures against the slave trade than for other ventures.”<sup>768</sup>

Some of the assertions in the previous paragraph are relatively well documented and corroborated. It is highly difficult to undermine the claim that the progression of the antislavery struggle occurred under different conditions in Africa and the east than in the

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<sup>764</sup> Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention*., p. 190. The Berlin Conference of 1885 and the 1890 Brussels Pact were important markers in this process.

<sup>765</sup> Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*., pp. xvii & xviii.

<sup>766</sup> Andreas and Nadleemann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations*., p. 29 and Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*., p. 351.

<sup>767</sup> Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*., pp. 37-38.

<sup>768</sup> ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*., p. 17. Miers has characterized this as the antislavery game. See ———, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*. and ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*.

transatlantic area. The struggle was clearly enmeshed with rivalry, territorial, national and power/material interests that contributed to the ‘scramble for Africa’ (and colonialism in general).<sup>769</sup> Of particular importance was the fact that, in relative terms, Britain’s international preponderance had decreased and it could not exercise levers the same way and to the same extent that it had during the transatlantic antislavery struggle.<sup>770</sup> However, the claims that humanitarian questions were often subordinated to and subsumed under other interests, and were used as instruments to achieve objectives when they dovetailed well with other ends lack nuance and have limited general purchase – even if the affirmation undoubtedly held true in many instances.<sup>771</sup>

Even analyses like Miers’ highlight the interplay of the originally practice conditioned and ideationally inspired (and by then institutionalized)<sup>772</sup> antislavery practices of the British (and arguably other European) authorities, and the tension that these generated in delineating and settling on policy. As Quirk has argued, from a strict rivalry, territorial, national and power/material interests perspective, in order to harness and maximize the actual (and potential) returns associated with established notions and forms of slavery in Africa and the east, there were two simple courses that all colonial powers should have followed: minimally, to adopt a non-interference approach or maximally, to sanction slavery in these geographical areas.<sup>773</sup> Instead, attempts to alleviate the tensions that antislavery practices exacted on other practices and interests (colonization and various forms of native bondage) yielded a variety of

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<sup>769</sup> It is important here not to overstate the linkage between antislavery and colonization. There is little doubt that antislavery served as a facilitator. However, it had no role in previous European colonization activities. As Quirk affirms it “added a new dimension to a pre-existing template...If organized antislavery had never materialized, there would have been no shortage of other justifications or motivations for colonial conquests in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.” Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 84.

<sup>770</sup> However, even with this relative decline, Britain was still the preeminent power of the nineteenth century and commanded substantial political and diplomatic resources.

<sup>771</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., pp. 66 and 93.

<sup>772</sup> It was the transposition of Quaker and Evangelical arguments, conditioned by their religious practices and beliefs, which began the dialectical process of challenging the legitimacy of slavery; these positions were later appropriated and internationalized by the British authorities. See chapters 2, 3 and 4.

<sup>773</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., pp. 59, 67-68 and 102.

outcomes that eventually culminated in the abolition of slavery and the ‘slow death’ of chattel slavery in Africa and the east.<sup>774</sup> Institutionalized (European) antislavery practices kept pushing forth until slavery was legally prohibited virtually everywhere on the planet.

To understand how this process of legal prohibition unfolded on a global scale, it is useful to turn to a tripartite framework elaborated by Quirk. The first axis of the framework emphasizes popular mobilization and is applicable mainly to the British experience (and to a lesser degree the American, French and Brazilian cases). The second involves armed conflict as a primary catalyst, and is applicable to the Haitian and American experiences. And the third, stressing external pressures as the chief vehicle, is exemplified by the continental European, African and eastern experiences. In the majority of cases, the globalization of antislavery occurred via external international pressures that were brought to bear on territories that were still engaging in slave trading and slavery.<sup>775</sup>

As Chapter Four has illustrated, the first phase of internationalizing Britain’s domestic antislavery practices was deployed on European nations. The dissemination within Europe of the notion that slave trading and slavery were illegitimate activities coincided with the ascendancy of Europe on the global stage. This unprecedented era of European material dominance – and its attending economic, military and organizational power – in the nineteenth century had important ramifications for the continuation of the globalization of antislavery. The dominance, spurred on by delineating peoples on the basis of technological

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<sup>774</sup> Although pressure was exercised on local authorities and encroachments on their internal affairs were common, substantive antislavery policies were usually instituted once colonial powers took outright control of territories. Even then, in practice, the balancing act between antislavery principles and other practices and interests resulted in slavery being phased out over extended periods of time. After independence, local authorities could not reverse course; doing so would result in an undesirable notoriety that would retrograde their recognition as fully sovereign entities included in international society. However, despite legal and verbal commitments, lack of will and/or incapacity contributed to the protracted phasing out of traditional slavery, resulting in the characterization of slow death (in some places, like Saudi, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, the process spanned into the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century). Abyssinia is a good case in point. Many nations, notably Britain, stood opposed to their admission into the League of Nations on the grounds of their unresolved issues regarding slavery. The Italians even cited the benefit of eliminating slavery in this ‘uncivilized’ state as part of the justification for their invasion. See *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 74-78, 80, 83, 91 and 96.

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 64-66 and 80-81.



achievements and racial differences, manifested itself through ideologies of civilization; Europeans assigned themselves pride of place in terms of being civilized and advanced versus others that were characterized as barbaric, backwards and/or savage.<sup>776</sup> These ideas were underpinned by some of the enlightenment's re-conceptualizations of the concept of progress (Christian non-conformist re-conceptualizations of progress, which disposed Quakers and Evangelicals to mount an organized challenge against slavery, were reviewed in Chapter Three). These notions of civilization were also reflected in international law where an attendant shift recognized the personality of sovereign states which were categorized as civilized, while political units made up of 'uncivilized' peoples were denied full personality and were deemed to be non-sovereign. Many peoples' outside Europe were classified in the latter category and would consequently be treated accordingly.<sup>777</sup> The logical corollary of these notions was that full sovereign personality could potentially be conferred on uncivilized groups provided that they eventually met certain European criteria and standards – a process that required active assistance from the civilized.<sup>778</sup>

Consequently, within the context of these notions of civilization, after Britain's key role in reshaping European attitudes towards slavery, the internationalization of antislavery was enmeshed in and unfolded through the expansion of European authority.<sup>779</sup> Although the British continued to play a dominant role and bore the largest brunt in terms of globalizing antislavery in the non-European/transatlantic world, they were joined in that theatre – in principle – by other European powers. After their sometimes obdurate resistance to prohibiting slave trading and slavery, once other European powers had joined the fold, they

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<sup>776</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-58.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-58 and 73-74.

<sup>778</sup> Ibid., pp. 70 and 83.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid., pp. 58 and 67.

united with the British in brandishing their antislavery credentials and commitments.<sup>780</sup> Those credentials were a key element of their binding ‘civilizational’ standard; a standard that collectively set them apart from non-European peoples.<sup>781</sup> As it related to audience issues, the closing of the gap on slavery between Britain and the rest of Europe was facilitated by the fact that “the nations of Western Europe shared a whole network of beliefs and associations of slavery which derived from the Bible, the works of classical antiquity, and actual experience with various kinds of servitude.”<sup>782</sup> In other words, the inculcation processes – shaped by practices and disseminated through them – to potentially endow others with similar dispositions enabling transformation was facilitated by shared and longstanding belief systems and associations. Once antislavery took hold (a difficult and arduous process), similar standards on which the competence of (anti)slavery practices could be judged were more susceptible to strengthen and entrench themselves.

This does not mean that European nations’ antislavery commitments were uniform, unwavering and cooperationist; as Quirk points out, “The Scramble for Africa saw European Powers engage in a complex mix of competition and collaboration.”<sup>783</sup> However, the creative gymnastics involved in balancing antislavery commitments with various other practices and interests often led to costs and complications.<sup>784</sup> In essence, antislavery was now an important delineator and benchmark of civilized status and became an integral component of the larger European package of criteria that non-civilized groups needed assistance in meeting in order to steadily progress towards full sovereign personality; a status that would allow them to

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<sup>780</sup> Here, Quirk uses Bernard McGrane’s notion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century European conceptualization of time within the larger processes of social evolution to explain the about face. Europeans, McGrane argues, perceived civilization developing from primitive to advanced through stages in time. By perceiving themselves as advanced, it was easier to characterize others as backwards, i.e., still in a previous stage of social evolution. Ibid., p.65. See also Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>781</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., pp. 65-66, 72 and 93.

<sup>782</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., p. vii.

<sup>783</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 93.

<sup>784</sup> This statement applies to the British as well as other European powers engaged in the colonial game. Ibid., pp. 58 and 68.

integrate and join the established ‘family of nations’.<sup>785</sup> As Quirk has observed, the project to reform the backwards and uncivilized “helped to imbue the Scramble for Africa – and colonialism more generally – with a degree of coherence and conviction, suggesting that there was more at stake than small-minded squabbles and territorial aggrandizement.”<sup>786</sup>

It is at this intersection that positions held by the discontinuity camp have ended up undervaluing and downplaying the historical linkages between traditional and contemporary/modern forms of slavery. By focusing on the transatlantic battle and emphasizing the ensuing European inspired global dissemination of the delegitimization and legal abolition of slavery, proponents in the discontinuity camp have tended to suspend their analyses prematurely. By obfuscating important historical linkages and developments, discontinuity renditions have contributed to the misapprehension surrounding the links between historical and contemporary forms of slavery. In fact, many practices classified under the rubric of modern and/or contemporary forms of slavery are historical evolutions flowing from the consequences of the external pressures that were brought to bear on various authorities to legally abolish slavery.<sup>787</sup> In turn, the evolutions in question can be traced to the outcomes of navigating and negotiating through the historical tensions generated by the conditions and predicaments highlighted in the previous paragraphs. Namely that, by the nineteenth century, slavery was singled out and recognized by Europeans as a unique and unconscionable evil and an illegitimate practice.<sup>788</sup> Antislavery was a crucial achievement and component of the civilizational standards that Europeans were using to demarcate

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<sup>785</sup> It is in this light that some have advanced antislavery as a form of cultural imperialism. See Temperley, "Anti-Slavery as a Form of Cultural Imperialism." As Quirk has cautioned, European antislavery should not be regarded as a project based on notions of human equality. It was fuelled as much – or more so – by self-perceptions of superiority that required a benevolent paternalism between “a helpless supplicant and “civilized” benefactor.” Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., pp. 58 and 70-71.

<sup>786</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 94.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid., pp. 137-138 and 242.

<sup>788</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810*., pp. 173-213, Brown, "Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.", p. 284, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*., pp. 300-332. ———, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770-1823*., p. 44 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 69.

themselves as superior to others.<sup>789</sup> Within their emerging dominance and expansion, it was inconceivable for Europeans to (openly) sanction the institution in areas under their tutelage or control; even if doing so would have served territorial, material and power interests.

Underscoring audience issues, during the period of the internationalization of antislavery to Africa and the east, more often than not, European colonial powers were engaged in negotiating with/persuading/coercing non-European leaders (and European colonial authorities) that were generally unconvinced of the illegitimacy of various forms bondage. These same authorities were held to account by segments of their respective populations that were equally unmoved and had vested interests in the continuation of the trade and institutions.<sup>790</sup> Ehud Toledano has observed that

...the Ottoman government, acting to accommodate its British ally, operated without an ideological support that would justify such a policy or endow it with meaning. For those who carried it out, this was change without genuine motivation, reform without conviction, a putting things right without accepting that they were indeed wrong.<sup>791</sup>

Although Toledano is referring specifically to British-Ottoman relations in the above passage, his characterization could be extended to cover antislavery relationships between a number of European and African/eastern authorities.<sup>792</sup> To reiterate, within the confines of the environmental factors, pressures and practices associated with the rivalry, territorial, national and power/material interests encompassed in the ‘scramble for Africa’ and colonialism, antislavery commitments had to be balanced with the multiple practices and interests of

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<sup>789</sup> The irony being that European civilization was, at the time, the most brutal and warlike.

<sup>790</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 59. In fact, many local authorities begrudgingly caved to antislavery pressures because it was politically expedient to do so. They lacked not only the penchant but more crucially, the capability to uphold and implement the engagements. The large majority of the non-European world regarded the institution of slavery as “entirely legitimate, socially necessary, and economically valuable.” ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 59, 74 and 115.

<sup>791</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, "Ottoman Concepts of Slavery in the Period of Reform (1830s-1880s)," in *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia*, ed. Martin A. Klein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993)., p. 47 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., pp. 80-81.

<sup>792</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., pp. 74 and 91.

various stakeholders. When and where the slave trade and/or slavery were finally legally prohibited, in order to ensure some type of stability, a quest for suitable replacements ensued.

The quest for suitable replacements, coupled with the outcomes of the dynamic of trying to balance antislavery objectives with the various other practices of colonial powers, colonial officials, local authorities and their respective constituencies led, using the European experiences with chattel slavery as a benchmark, to a process of redefining what practices constituted (or not) slavery. This resulted, for example, in the rationalization of schemes like forced and indentured labour as sufficiently different – and therefore legitimate – forms of labour that did not constitute slavery. Authorities justified the use of these types of labour practices by characterizing them as a step up from slavery; like other gradualist schemes, they were rationalized as necessary intermediate states between slavery and freedom (these matters will be explored further in Chapter Six).<sup>793</sup> These developments echo what was covered in Chapter Two in terms of past legitimizations of slavery; namely, how, in historical terms, extant and well entrenched slavery practices were able to condition emerging thought frameworks – even those with seemingly inherent openings to counter slavery – to accommodate the institution and ensure its continuity by underwriting its ability to adapt and persist. Within the qualitative difference of the reasonable invocation of a break with millennia long precedents regarding the appropriateness of slavery from the European perspective (covered in chapters 3 and 4), the thought conditioning resistance displayed by well-entrenched practices in Africa and the east attest to similar patterns of (continuous and continuing) evolution.

These developments played an important role in facilitating and undergirding the progression of what we have commonly come to refer to as variants of slavery classified under the rubric of modern and/or contemporary forms. For example, in some geographical

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<sup>793</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96 and 103-110.

quarters, within the balancing act required to accommodate antislavery with other practices and interests, the dynamic of finding suitable replacements resulted in a reversion to – and/or morphing of – and increases in pre-existing forms of non-chattel bondage practices (like the case of debt bondage on the Indian subcontinent covered earlier in this chapter). Consequently, when interrogated from a macro perspective, we can better ascertain and appreciate the fact that the collection of practices classified under the rubric of modern and/or contemporary forms of slavery were gradually redefined as variants of bondage as a result of multiple rounds and outcomes of antislavery campaigning; each round was conditioned by the effects of earlier contests. It is this continuous (and continuing) process of redefinition – influenced by the conditioning effects of clashing practices – that brought various non-chattel bondage activities into the sights of antislavery activists. As it relates to international law, Quirk has framed this process of constant reformulation as a progression in which the principle of strict equivalence was gradually replaced by that of sufficient similarity<sup>794</sup> (a significant matter that will be expanded upon in the next chapter).

To return to the focus of the current chapter, as previously indicated, in the majority of cases, the globalization of antislavery occurred via external international pressures that were brought to bear on territories that were still engaging in slave trading and slavery. For places that escaped direct colonization, the practice of antislavery was intertwined with defending political autonomy. Part of this defence involved politically expedient commitments to antislavery in order to demonstrate ‘civilized’ credentials to the rest of international society.<sup>795</sup> In other geographical areas, it took direct colonization for antislavery practices to eventually and gradually take hold. In both instances, the gap between expedient

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<sup>794</sup> See ———, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.", ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, chapter 5, ———, "Modern Slavery.", p. 333, Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, chapters 8, 9 and 19, and Claude Emerson Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo," *Human Rights Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2008).

<sup>795</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, pp. 76, 80-81 and chapter 3.

declarations, commitments and/or legislation, and actual implementation, execution and enforcement remained significant.

To recap and reiterate, what is of primordial importance to the present study is that these developments and linkages indicate that, within the monumental shift in the delegitimization and abolition of slavery (and the attendant quasi disappearance of chattel slavery), there is an element of continuity that discontinuity representations have a tendency to gloss over. A practice focus can bridge the divergent positions (discontinuity and continuity) to better account for stability within change – and potentially contribute to larger and more general discussions about stability and change in IR theory. Focusing on and producing an account of the practices of antislavery internationalization within the larger field of practices compels us to engage with the simultaneous processes of stability and change.<sup>796</sup> More specifically, if practices are, as Adler and Pouliot advance, organized around shared practical understandings acquired through learning via guidance and repetition, audience issues become a crucial element in our comprehension and appraisal of stability and change (or evolution) – as demonstrated in the case of the transformations of debt bondage on the Indian subcontinent.

As a practice, antislavery conditioned (and conditions) interactions between various actors and audiences in the struggle against the institution of slavery. In Adler and Pouliot's parlance, learning and inculcation are shaped by practices and disseminated through them. This process can potentially endow other social actors with similar dispositions which can enable transformation.<sup>797</sup> In the post-transatlantic phase of the struggle against slavery, Europeans attempted to disseminate (or, more accurately, impose) their antislavery practices

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<sup>796</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 1.

<sup>797</sup> Ibid., p. 8. On the basis of this notion, through the concept of communities of practice, Adler has developed a theoretical framework to explain the dissemination of practices in the international realm. See Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations*. and ———, "The Spread of Security Communities: Communities of Practice, Self-Restraint, and Nato's Post-Cold War Transformation."

– based predominantly on their thought frameworks and experiences with the chattel variant

– to geographical areas with a longstanding history with varying bondage practices underpinned by differing thought frameworks and societal structures.<sup>798</sup> The point here is that audiences in Africa and the east (including many colonial officials) were not receptive and disposed to adopt, enact and enforce European inspired antislavery policies and practices. Similar standards between Europeans and Africans/easterners on which the competence of (anti)slavery practices could be judged were nonexistent or weak at best. Arguably, enmeshed with Europeans' overall package of civilizational standards, of which antislavery formed an integral component, the post transatlantic antislavery struggle can be construed as a formative period where group membership characterized by mutual intelligibility and susceptibility in identifying and sustaining shared antislavery practices was being negotiated and contested (akin to what non-conformists catalyzed on the domestic British scene and the British authorities facilitated on the continental European/transatlantic stage). Tracking the outcomes of these contestations can facilitate linking the development, redefinition and evolution of other activities that are now routinely characterized as contemporary and/or modern forms of slavery with their historical counterparts. Conceptualizing change in this fashion gives added credence to notions that things are in a perpetual state of flux; it also avoids the risk of prematurely suspending analyses and endowing important shifts regarding the legitimacy of practices with a conclusive finality.

The case of the international struggle can be used to neatly articulate the utility of conceptualizing change in this fashion. The attempt to disseminate antislavery practices clashed with other entrenched practices – slavery and non-slavery related – that were

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<sup>798</sup> Including non-Christian religions such as Islam and Hinduism. David Eltis has noted an absence of a concerted questioning of slavery's legitimacy in non-western intellectual traditions. See David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 4.



hardened by attending material interests and arrangements. As Quirk has observed, rather than marking “a decisive break with the past...”

...the legal abolition of slavery usually marked (at best) a qualified reconfiguration of entrenched socioeconomic cleavages, with former slave owners and their sympathizers seeking to defend their earlier prerogatives and investments, and slaves and ex-slaves seeking to carve out new options and opportunities in the face of continued opposition. These protracted contests over the boundaries of freedom and coercion were further complicated by various forms of government intervention, which saw public officials attempt to reconcile their anti-slavery obligations with a variety of economic interests and ideological agendas. From this vantage point, legal abolition can be best understood as a qualified first step, rather than a historical endpoint.<sup>799</sup>

In light of these interjections, within a practice framework, contemporary forms of slavery can be seen for what they are; historically mediated and path dependent sets of evolving activities that can be traced back to the outcomes of historical struggles and forms. This is consistent with Adler and Pouliot’s discussion about one of the ways that adopting practices as the point of origin for analyses in international politics can add value; namely, tracking how the practices of antislavery were generated and propagated can serve to denaturalize the relatively taken-for-granted notions that slavery is an historical artefact and that contemporary variants are substantively different and/or novel from past incarnations.<sup>800</sup>

In keeping with the spirit of Quirk’s analyses and assessments, along with the ensuing phases of the struggle that brought non-chattel variants within the sights of activists, the legal abolition of slavery can then be conceptualized as the first in a number of phases in the antislavery struggle<sup>801</sup>; the logical corollary being that each phase is conditioned by contestations, negotiations and outcomes of the previous one/ones. This concords well with Neumann’s contention that making practices the point of departure for investigation forces us

<sup>799</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 113.

<sup>800</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 29.

<sup>801</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 113.

to better incorporate dynamism into our investigations (see Chapter One).<sup>802</sup> And, it also speaks to Williams' observations and concerns regarding the relationship between analytic and political practices and the relationship between scholarship and power (Chapter One).<sup>803</sup> The implications of some of these points will be explored in the conclusion of this study.

By illustrating how the external pressures (inspired by European experiences and practices) that were brought to bear to abolish slavery in India led, through clashing practices and understandings, to the adaptation and expansion of a millennia old form of bondage which persists on the subcontinent to this day (and is currently considered the most problematic and expansive form of modern/contemporary slavery), the tracking and analysis of the impact of antislavery practices on the evolution of debt bondage on the Indian subcontinent was used to flesh out some of the added values that a practice orientation purports to append to our understanding of stability and change in global affairs. The next chapter will briefly continue this process by tracking and analyzing similar transformations and adaptations of bondage practices elsewhere within the backdrop of the portrait of the evolving international environment provided here. The chapter will then elucidate, how, in response to these developments, continuing abolitionist activities contributed to the evolving and gradual reformulation of the definition of slavery in international law (entailing a move from the principle of strict equivalence to sufficient similarity).<sup>804</sup> Basically, as a result of rounds of antislavery campaigning, the characterizations of 'debt' and other forms of bondage as distinct from slavery eventually broke down. Consequently, slavery was redefined to encompass some of the practices we currently label as modern and/or contemporary forms of slavery. It is at this intersection that discontinuity depictions could be

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<sup>802</sup> Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy.", p. 631.

<sup>803</sup> Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security.*, pp. 7 and 9.

<sup>804</sup> See Quirk, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.", ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, chapter 5, ———, "Modern Slavery.", p. 333, Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, chapters 8, 9 and 19, and Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo."

complemented by continuity representations to avoid the pitfalls of endowing the legal abolition of slavery with a conclusive finality and adjust invocations of novelty and difference in relation to contemporary forms of bondage.

## **Chapter 6**

# **Internationalization, International Machinery and Redefining Slavery**

Squaring the Circle: the Discontinuity and Continuity Divide

As of the late 19<sup>th</sup> c., as the slave trade and chattel slavery were slowly and effectively receding in various world quarters, the contentions surrounding slavery were slowly evolving from concerns regarding the slave trade and chattel slavery to apprehensions about various practices such as indentured and forced labour, debt bondage, serfdom, servile marriage, child servitude and, more contemporaneously, human trafficking and migrant and contract labour/slavery.<sup>805</sup> Efforts to address these evolving concerns at various international gatherings and within international institutions are reflected in the development and evolution of the body of international law dealing with slavery. Various markers can be identified in the progression of the internationalization of the antislavery struggle and corresponding developments in international law. Here is a list of some of the more significant ones: the Concert of Europe or Congress System (especially the 1815 Congress of Vienna), the 1884-85 Berlin Conference, the 1889-90 Brussels Conference, the 1919 Saint-Germain-en-Laye Treaty, the League of Nations 1926 Slavery Convention, the 1956 United Nations (UN) Supplementary Convention, the establishment of the 1975 UN Working Group on Slavery and various ILO and trafficking conventions.

It is through these venues, processes, conventions and treaties that the struggle against slavery progressed from the initial British led attack on the transatlantic trade and chattel slavery, to encompass a global assault on ‘slavery in all its forms’<sup>806</sup>, and in due course, a charge against what eventually came to be designated as ‘contemporary forms of slavery.’<sup>807</sup>

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<sup>805</sup> The evolution was of course not linear and uniform. While practices like indentured and forced labour, debt bondage, serfdom, servile marriage and child servitude came into the sights of antislavery activists, slave trading and the legal institution of slavery persisted in certain world quarters (Africa and the Middle East) well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To this day, chattel slavery still remains an issue in places like Mauritania, Sudan and Niger.

<sup>806</sup> This sentence formulation first appeared in the 1919 Saint-Germain-en-Laye Treaty and was conserved in the League’s 1926 slavery convention.

<sup>807</sup> Includes the practices of “forced labour, sweated labour, forced prostitution, forced marriage, the exploitation of child labour and of migrant and contract labour.” Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a*

In this sense, the practices that have today been labelled contemporary forms of slavery can be traced back and linked to both the successes and limitations of the concerted and organized British antislavery struggle initiated in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. As Quirk affirms, “most of the problems that have recently been brought together under the rubric of contemporary forms of slavery primarily involve the extension and reconfiguration of enduring historical themes, rather than distinctively modern innovations.”<sup>808</sup>

In the current chapter, the emphasis will be on how, in response to pressures to abolish (and eventual abolition), the continuation and/or transformation and expansion of different forms of servitude led to a gradual redefinition of slavery to encompass – and attack – various forms. Consequently, Chapter Six will continue demonstrating how a practice approach can help temper the tendency of invoking, imbuing and/or stretching an historical disjuncture regarding slavery to the point where the gains made by the initial phases of the antislavery struggle acquire a conclusive finality. This will help to highlight the existence of threads linking how the successes and lacunae of these initial phases of the antislavery struggle tie into (or have evolved into) the fight against bondage practices that are now commonly referred to as contemporary forms of slavery. In turn, the proposition that a practice approach can afford a better purchase on understanding the global evolution of the antislavery struggle – thus bridging the divide between continuity and discontinuity representations regarding slavery – will be strengthened. At a more generic level, as practice theory/approach advocates have recently argued, this reinforces the notion that making practices the point of departure for investigation and research can be a fruitful and worthwhile endeavour; one that may allow a better apprehension of issues of stability and change.

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*Global Problem.*, p. xii. The term first seems to have made its way into the jargon when the UN’s Working Group on Slavery was renamed in 1988 to the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

<sup>808</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 140. This notion is central in Quirk’s work.

As outlined in Chapter Five, trying to balance the exertion of pressure to abolish the slave trade and slavery with other entrenched practices impacted the increase and/or adaptation of extant forms of servitude. The outcomes of the attempted reconciliation of those tensions conditioned the very possibility of reconfiguring extant models of bondage. Or, in other words, in the quest to find suitable replacements, existing forms (or practices) served as templates that were rearranged (consciously or not) to try to ensure some form of stability (or minimal disruption to the status quo ante). Quirk summarizes the transformative processes that legal abolition engendered by emphasizing that

...the legal abolition of slavery usually marked (at best) a qualified reconfiguration of entrenched socioeconomic cleavages, with former slave owners and their sympathizers seeking to defend their earlier prerogatives, and slaves and ex-slaves seeking to carve out new options and opportunities in the face of continued opposition. These protracted contests over the boundaries of freedom and coercion were further complicated by various forms of government intervention, which saw public officials attempt to reconcile their anti-slavery obligations with a variety of economic interests and ideological agendas. From this vantage point, legal abolition could best be understood as qualified first step, rather than a historical endpoint.<sup>809</sup>

Using the benchmark of chattel slavery as a point of reference, these developments eventually led activists to express concerns about the similarity of these historic and/or altered practices with slavery. This coincided with the appearance and usage of the term traditional or classical to denote the chattel variant of slavery. It also eventually led to the broadening of what could and/or should be included as forms of bondage that, in a continuation of the antislavery battle begun in the late 18<sup>th</sup> c., should be addressed and eradicated.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the processes described thus far were encapsulated in the dynamics of the antislavery struggle within international machinery and its concomitant development and evolution of slavery related international law. The most significant of these markers were the 1919 Saint-Germain-en-Laye Treaty, the League of Nations 1926 Slavery Convention,

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<sup>809</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

the United Nations 1956 Supplementary Convention and the establishment and efforts of the 1975 UN Working Group on Slavery (renamed the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery in 1988).<sup>810</sup> Consequently, we will now turn to expounding how these significant historical markers/events relate to the practice approach adopted in the thesis.

The chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will provide a brief sketch of the incidence that legal abolition had on the continuation and/or transformation and expansion of select labour practices and forms of servitude (forced and indentured labour and servile marriage); these reformed practices eventually drew the indignation of antislavery activists. Focusing on the markers mentioned in the previous paragraph, the second part of the chapter will illustrate how these (and other) mutated and expanded practices contributed to a redefinition of slavery in international law. This re-conceptualization facilitated the eventual designation of various forms of bondage as contemporary forms of slavery – denoting a reconfigured continuity of some lasting historical leitmotifs, rather than a clear and sharp historical rupture.

### Recrudescence and/or Reconfiguration: Labour and other Practices Couched as Slavery?

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, forced and indentured labour were not new phenomena; both these practices had a long historical pedigree. However, pressures to abolish slavery and eventual abolition had important impacts on the recrudescence, reconfiguration and expansion of these practices.

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<sup>810</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 417.



## Berlin and Brussels: Antislavery as a Legitimater and Facilitator of Colonialism

When the scramble for Africa gained steam in the 1880s, anti-slavery measures were already being cited as ostensible justifications for colonial expansion.<sup>811</sup> The 1884-85 Berlin and 1889-1890 Brussels Conferences added substance to these expressions and solidified these rationalizations. The Berlin Conference is best remembered for achieving what it was specifically convened to do; to find a satisfactory formula for coastal colonial annexations in Africa and to ensure that the Congo and Niger rivers remained open for trade to all nations.<sup>812</sup> However, under pressure by the antislavery lobby in Britain, the British authorities proposed that “the conference should also condemn the slave trade as a crime against the law of nations (or human rights), liable to prosecution by the tribunals of all “civilized countries,” “whatever the nationality of the offender.”<sup>813</sup> Britain accepted to put forth this proposal because it was facing growing challenges from its colonial rivals. The British could no longer rely on their established coastal dominance to police/suppress the trade. A related problem was that Britain did not have the right to patrol territorial waters, which made suppression even more difficult. Ultimately, each colonizing nation dealt with slavers in their own way; a concerted policy was required.<sup>814</sup>

Analogous to what occurred at the Congress of Vienna eighty years prior, the ultimate outcome at Berlin was a declaration included in the Berlin Act that “the exports of slaves was forbidden by international law and that operations, which supplied it on land and water ought to be regarded as forbidden.”<sup>815</sup> Additionally, the powers with territories in the Congo basin agreed to “watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery,

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<sup>811</sup> Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo.", p. 86.

<sup>812</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 19.

<sup>813</sup> Ibid.

<sup>814</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

and especially the slave trade.”<sup>816</sup> No monitoring and/or enforcement mechanisms were put into place. Nevertheless, the significance of the declaration lay in the fact that it was the first multinational declaration that condemned the slave trade on land and integrated native welfare on the international agenda. Similar to the anti slave trade declaration at the Congress of Vienna, the Berlin Conference declaration served the function of beginning the process of delegitimizing certain conducts and setting new benchmarks, which meant that future violations could entail costs.

The catalyst for the Brussels conference a few years later originated with a specific threat to European missions in Africa. In response to evidence presented in the late 1860s about the ravages of the slave trade in the African interior,<sup>817</sup> the 1880s had seen the establishment of many Christian missions in Africa. These missions were intent on bringing “Christianity, commerce and civilization” to the interior of the continent. They were threatened by a land grab initiated by native populations (and their European allies) with interests in the perpetuation of the slave trade. The objective of these groups was to pre-empt European expansion and interference. With papal blessing, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (the French archbishop of Carthage and Algiers and primate of Africa) started touring Europe to raise a corps of military volunteers to combat these native groups and the continental African slave trade.<sup>818</sup> The indirect effect of Lavigerie’s campaign – his project never actually came to fruition – was the revival of British antislavery, namely the British and Foreign Anti Slavery Society (BFASS).<sup>819</sup> As an alternative to Lavigerie’s militaristic solution, the pacifistic organization pressed the British authorities to act. The British authorities decided that the best course of action was to call a conference of African coastal powers to discuss

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<sup>816</sup> Ibid.

<sup>817</sup> British missionary David Livingstone was instrumental in revealing and disseminating this type of information. See David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1857).

<sup>818</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*.

<sup>819</sup> Founded in 1839 and still with us to this day under the name of Anti Slavery International (ASI).

measures to be taken to combat the trade.<sup>820</sup> This dovetailed well with the British government's concerns that they not be at a comparative disadvantage versus their colonial rivals due to their antislavery positions. If rivals tolerated the traffic and slavery, there was a risk that trade and export goods would flow to their territories.<sup>821</sup> In order to deflect potential accusations that they were concealing ulterior motives, the British authorities asked Belgium's King Leopold to hold the conference in Brussels; Leopold obliged.

The ultimate outcome of the conference went beyond the British proposals for some type of agreement against the export traffic. King Leopold, in conjunction with other colonial powers, seized the opportunity to negotiate a relatively comprehensive treaty against the African slave trade; a treaty that would concurrently serve alternative objectives and purposes.<sup>822</sup> Various detailed anti slave trade provisions were supplemented with a declaration – at the instigation of King Leopold – that the most efficient means of attacking the trade on land was by establishing colonial administrations, controlling trade routes, constructing transport and communications infrastructures and offering protection to trading companies and missionaries.<sup>823</sup> The carving up of Africa was thus solidified by the ostensible justification that its colonization was partly an antislavery measure. The signatories bound themselves to enact laws to enforce and punish slavers while providing various types of support for freed slaves. The suppression of the slave trade and slavery became an integral part of the ideological package of the European civilizing mission in which colonial conquest and the reshaping of African society, politics, economics and religious beliefs were

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<sup>820</sup> Miers, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 198 and ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 20.

<sup>821</sup> Miers, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 198

<sup>822</sup> For some details about the comprehensive measures, see ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 21.

<sup>823</sup> Ibid. and ———, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 199.

rationalized.<sup>824</sup> This echoes the sentiment that the project to reform the backwards and uncivilized “helped to imbue the Scramble for Africa – and colonialism more generally – with a degree of coherence and conviction, suggesting that there was more at stake than small-minded squabbles and territorial aggrandizement.”<sup>825</sup> Consistent with the declaration appended to the 1885 Berlin Act, the Brussels Pact kept ‘native welfare’ on the international agenda while establishing international standards of conduct that governments the world over could be scrutinized against in the future.<sup>826</sup>

However, the pact’s immediate practical effects were negligible. No effective monitoring and/or enforcement machinery was put in place. In an environment of colonial rivalry and competition where land was still available to grab, labour needs and alliance considerations often trumped – or tempered – antislavery commitments.<sup>827</sup> Once again, a complicating factor in Africa and the east was that the existence of variegated forms of slavery were still considered normal and legitimate; populations in these regions were far from adopting the collective European understandings that slavery was morally wrong.

### Impacts on Extant Templates

#### Forced Labour

Within the environmental conditions reviewed here and in Chapter Five, in order to reconcile their antislavery commitments and colonial (geopolitical) interests, in addition to initial characterizations of the variegated forms of slavery in Africa and the east as benign,<sup>828</sup>

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<sup>824</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 10.

<sup>825</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 94 and ———, “Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.”, p. 539.

<sup>826</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 23 and Welch, “Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo.”, p. 85.

<sup>827</sup> Miers, “The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.”, p. 196. For a detailed treatment on how the interplay of these factors affected antislavery policy see ———, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, chapters 2 to 5.

<sup>828</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 31-32, ———, “The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.”, p. 200, Quirk, “The

colonial administrators made a distinction between slavery and other forms of coercive labour that were being sanctioned and used in their colonies. Using (chattel) slavery as a benchmark, apologists defended compulsory labour practices as being different.<sup>829</sup> These practices were justified as a step up from slavery; along with apprenticeship schemes, free birth laws and penal sanctions for vagrancy and breach of contract – introduced in various places after abolition – compulsory labour was justified as a transitory scheme to prepare the ground for a full transition to wage labour.<sup>830</sup> Forced labourers were often employed in various public works (a good example is building infrastructure like railways). These and other activities, like being forcibly conscripted for war efforts, were characterized as contributions to public goods. The reality was that colonial governments were cash strapped and could not pay market rates for large infrastructure projects. Most Africans were subsistence farmers and had no incentive to leave their fields to work for a pittance away from home in treacherous conditions.<sup>831</sup> A good example of one existing template that took on expansion as a result of abolition is the couching of forced labour by native elites under the guise of communal labour. Communal labour was a custom of societal contribution in which people carried out work voluntarily and without pay “to carry out rapidly a public work for the common benefit.” With the disappearance of legal slavery, native leaders pliantly used the language of communal labour to stand in for slavery – and colonial authorities conveniently bought into their representations of the customary and voluntary nature of the practice.<sup>832</sup>

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Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.", p. 590 and T.G Otte, "A Course of Unceasing Remonstrance: British Diplomacy and the Suppression of the Slave Trade in the East," in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009)., pp. 96-97.

<sup>829</sup> Quirk, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.", p. 532.

<sup>830</sup> ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 95.

<sup>831</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 47 and ———, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 201. As well, millions of Africans were conscripted into service in WWI as porters and soldiers. Under government sanction, forced labourers were also utilized in private endeavours.

<sup>832</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 139-140 and Keith Hamilton and Farida Shaikh, "Introduction," in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of*

Two main factors surrounding forced labour eventually drew the ire of activists. First, documented cases showed that labourers worked in horrendous conditions, suffered terrible abuses and received little or no compensation for the risky services they ‘provided’. Second, in many instances, coercive labour activities were associated with high death rates.<sup>833</sup> Ex-slaves shouldered most of the burdens. Labour shortages, necessity, and references to assisting native peoples to overcome their natural limitations (of being lazy, backwards, childlike) made for a convenient and potent mix to justify these practices.<sup>834</sup> In essence, as abolition was progressively being instituted throughout the continent (pushed forth by public scandals, activism and political pressure), there was a concomitant (re)development and expansion of a historical form of labour extraction. These coercive labour activities were government sanctioned and, given that practically all European powers were engaging in them, colonizing states refrained from criticizing one another for engaging in these types of labour activities. While officials were expending great efforts to rationalize these practices as sufficiently different from slavery, colonial critics and activists were trying to assert the contrary; namely, that these practices approximated conditions present in slavery and therefore warranted further inquiry and action. Although forced labour has largely subsided as a result of campaigning by the antislavery and labour movements and the establishment

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*the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009)., p. 15.

<sup>833</sup> Three of the best known instances are the cases of the Congo Free State, the Portuguese recruitment of Angolan labourers for the purposes of plantation work on the islands of Sao Tome and Principe and the Putumayo scandal. See Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", pp. 243-249, Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 48-55 and 135-143 and Glyn Stone, "The Foreign Office and Forced Labour in Portuguese West Africa, 1894-1914," in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009).

<sup>834</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*. p. 138, Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 102 and 115 and Mandy Banton, "The "Taint of Slavery": The Colonial Office and the Regulation of Free Labour " in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009)., p. 156.

and use of instruments like the League, UN and the ILO, it is still a significant issue in places like North Korea, Burma and Eritrea.<sup>835</sup>

### Indentured Labour

As abolition's internationalization steadily progressed, another historical practice that took on expansion was indentured migration. Way before the organized antislavery movement began, as of the 16<sup>th</sup> c., significant numbers of indentured labourers went to toil in the Americas. However, as a result of the abolition of slavery, the history of indentured migration entered another phase.<sup>836</sup> Especially in plantation economies, employers fell back on and expanded the practice of indenture to secure inexpensive labour. Even in places with no prior history of slave labour (such as Australia, Malaya, Peru, Fiji and Hawaii), antislavery's successes in delegitimizing slavery as a potential labour extraction method facilitated the turn to using indentured labour on various projects. "By delegitimizing an otherwise potentially attractive model, the Anti Slavery Project inhibited the expansion of slavery into new arenas, and instead compelled various economic elites to turn to related alternatives."<sup>837</sup>

Akin to forced labour, the case was made that indenture was sufficiently different from slavery to warrant its existence and use. Apologists routinely harkened back to the voluntary nature of indenture contracts to make their case. The justification was that individuals that chose, of their own free accord, to migrate as indentured labourers could not be considered slaves.<sup>838</sup> More generally, as it related to various non-chattel forms of

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<sup>835</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 138. Forced labour was still a common practice well into the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>836</sup> David Northrup estimates that over 2 million people were implicated in the indentured labour traffic. See David Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)., p. 157. Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*., p. 7.

<sup>837</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 131 and Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922*.

<sup>838</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*., p. 19.

servitude, the overarching argument was that individuals that were theoretically free to leave their former masters could technically not be considered slaves anymore. At this juncture, it would be useful to open a brief parenthesis to explore the notion of choice in post-abolition settings.

In most instances, after abolition, land and other livelihood resources that could serve as viable and attractive alternatives to slavery were scarce. These circumstances left the 'emancipated' in a relatively weak bargaining positions versus a significant group of potential employers, their former masters. The situation facilitated the use of coercion and compulsion by former masters to secure services on their preferred terms.<sup>839</sup> Rather than risking the uncertainty and precariousness that could result from asserting their freedom, desperation often drove ex-slaves to 'choose' practices like indenture and debt bondage. In this sense, as opposed to the predominantly western understanding of freedom as individual autonomy, the consideration of freedom as isolation, vulnerability and precariousness offers better purchase to make sense of outcomes.<sup>840</sup> In these conditions, stretched to its limits and logical conclusion, freedom as individual autonomy could be equated to the freedom to famish.<sup>841</sup> Ex-slaves' self-preservation imperative, coupled with former masters' profit motives – entangled with entrenched notions of entitlement and deference within various well entrenched practices of social hierarchy and dependence<sup>842</sup> – help explain the emancipateds' proclivity to return to the familiar (their former masters) under less than ideal terms and conditions. In these circumstances, the arguments that individuals that chose, 'of their own free accord', to migrate as indentured labourers or that 'voluntarily' remained within their

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<sup>839</sup> Ibid., p. 42 and Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", p. 241.

<sup>840</sup> See Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, "African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality," in *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977). or Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. and ———, *Freedom*.

<sup>841</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 115 and Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo.", p. 128.

<sup>842</sup> Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo.", p. 72 and Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", p. 254.



masters' orbits (in different forms of bondage approximating slavery) could no longer be considered slaves lacked ostensible traction.

In its more malevolent incarnations, indentured labour reproduced excesses and abuses similar to those documented in slavery. Deception was usually widespread in recruitment processes. Advertised working conditions rarely reflected the actual conditions that migrants faced when they got to their destinations. This further clouded the argument that the voluntary choice to partake in indentured contracts invalidated the comparison of indentured labour to slavery. Indentured labourers usually performed the same duties as ex-slaves and were subjected to eerily similar work regimes.<sup>843</sup> Even if corporal punishments may have decreased, those forms of punishment were replaced with other control mechanisms such as penal sanctions, draconian penalties for absences and 'poor' performance, and the use of various instruments for the compulsory renewal of contracts.<sup>844</sup> Although antislavery activism contributed to the ending of indentured labour, various abusive and exploitative contemporary migration schemes can be traced back and linked to indentured migration systems. For example, forms of labour that are now commonly referred to as 'contract' slavery, such as imports of foreign domestics, field hands and various types of labourers in oil producing states, are legacies emanating from the practice of indenture.<sup>845</sup> Just like indenture, they are government sanctioned and regulated; and, just like indenture, deception is usually widespread in recruitment processes and advertised working conditions rarely reflect the actual conditions that migrants face when they get to their destinations. In other words, these contemporary migration schemes can be considered indentured labour's latest mutations (or descendents). Before moving on to how the antislavery struggle and international law were impacted by virtue of these types of altered and evolving bondage

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<sup>843</sup> Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", p. 242.

<sup>844</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p.7 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 133.

<sup>845</sup> Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy.*, pp. 19-20.

practices, a final example of the alteration of a fundamental institution (marriage) as a result of the legal abolition of slavery will briefly be outlined.

### (Servile) Marriage

The concept of servile marriage is another good example of a clash of practices contributing to the transformation of an extant institution to mitigate the disappearance of legalized slavery. In the case of women (especially in Africa), freedom – understood as the cessation of the legal status of being a slave – ran up against longstanding and deep-rooted socially entrenched practices anchored in notions of patriarchy and dependency. Legalized slavery facilitated and solidified the ability of men to keep women in compliant and precarious positions. With slavery abolished, one of the instruments that evolved and took on added significance in perpetuating women's – especially former female slaves' – dependence and vulnerability was marriage.

Within the context of colonial competition, unless it was perceived as unavoidable and/or threatened key interests, the juggling act required to balance colonizing powers' interests with the interests of various stakeholders (including native leaders and populations) often meant that colonial administrations were reticent to, and usually refrained from, meddling in various local practices. Marriage was one of those native practices. In various African and eastern settings, it was often difficult to discern wives from slaves. Framing local marriage customs and practices as a domestic rather than a public issue was a crafty way for colonial officials to ostensibly meet antislavery commitments while simultaneously tending to colonial interests and not meddling in native culture.<sup>846</sup> Akin to former masters on the Indian subcontinent expediently taking advantage of newly introduced colonial institutions (in the form of labour codes and contracts) to redefine their relationships with their bondsmen

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<sup>846</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 127 and Hamilton and Shaikh, "Introduction.", p. 15.

and retain control, former masters in Africa and the Middle East gladly took advantage of colonizers' reticence to meddle in local practices by using the language of marriage to retain control of their female slaves.

This meant that marriage could be used to conceal and safeguard slavery. Furthermore, as a result of interest and eventual probes into these matters (brought on by abolition), the treatment and condition of wives within established and expected provisos of customary marriage practices invited comparisons of their circumstances to those of slaves within slavery.<sup>847</sup> Within the backdrop of the parallel evolution of antislavery, women's and human rights movements, these inquiries eventually led to the elaboration of the concept of servile marriage;<sup>848</sup> a concept which was included in the UN's 1956 Supplementary Convention (a convention that will be examined in the next section of this chapter) as one of four specific forms of slavery to be combated alongside traditional (chattel) slavery. In this sense, the mutation of marriage practices resulting from legal abolition drew attention to socially entrenched practices rooted in patriarchy and dependency. This led to the elaboration of the concept of servile marriage, which, like many other practices that were transformed and expanded as a result of legal abolition, contributed to and were encompassed in larger and discreet processes that eventually led to the designation of certain practices as contemporary forms of slavery. Or, in other words, the origins of servile marriage can be traced back to tensions between European antislavery, colonization and native practices, and serves as a good illustration of the transformative and evolutionary power and impact that the legal abolition of slavery had on extant practice templates. In turn, these types of mutated practices shaped evolving reflections and deliberations that led, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the elaboration of the contemporary forms of slavery moniker.

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<sup>847</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 128.

<sup>848</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 25 and 208-209.

The transformation/expansion of practices like debt bondage, forced and indentured labour and servile marriage brought on by the legal abolition of slavery led to a dialogical bifurcation between what was referred to as ‘real/classical/traditional/true’ slavery, and practices that were justified as being sufficiently different, and therefore legitimate. This bifurcation conditioned ensuing debates about the similarities and differences of practices that could be considered analogous to slavery, launching the antislavery struggle into its next phase. It is worth taking pause here to underline that certain themes like poverty, inequality and precariousness are common denominators in all manifestations of bondage. These themes are also symptoms of the darker side of modern day capitalism; as long as they are not effectively mitigated and they place individuals at a relative disadvantage when it comes to bargaining their terms of service, involuntary labour practices will be perceived as having a comparative advantage and exploitation and bondage will therefore persist.<sup>849</sup> This observation adds substance to the affirmation that modern day forms of servitude are reconfigurations and evolutions that are difficult to decouple from the past and treat as novel. By extension, this adds substance to the notion that, in response to the dialectic clash of practices that bring into question the legitimacy of certain activities (brought on by dispositionally enabled reflections and deliberations which are themselves conditioned by practices), practices (especially well entrenched ones) usually exhibit a robust resistance to change and tend to condition evolving thought patterns. Once again, practices tend to morph rather than come to a conclusive end.

Ultimately, as a consequence of the legal abolition of slavery, altered and expanded bondage practices introduced a difficult conundrum. These reconfigured practices could be placed on a continuum.<sup>850</sup> At one end, some of them reduced several of the most dreadful aspects of slavery and led to piecemeal yet noticeable improvements for ex-slaves; at the

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<sup>849</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 238.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

opposite end however, they reproduced some of the most frightful elements and conditions of slavery. Governments were complicit in the development and expansion of these altered practices. To justify their existence and use, procedural differences were cited to demarcate them from slavery. In an environment where slavery was no longer legal, the task of qualifying the condition of the individuals on the disquieting end of this spectrum became challenging. There was an ambiguity in clearly differentiating between legitimate labour exchanges and situations that subjected people to conditions that were analogous to slavery. In other words, it became difficult to identify and define slavery in an environment where its practice no longer had legal standing (or, did not exist in theory). As Quirk has affirmed, as it related (and still relates) to reconfigured (and evolving) practices, “the key question should not only be whether or not they were identical to slavery, but also whether they shared sufficient features with slavery to be rendered illegitimate as a result of prior commitments to the Anti Slavery Project.”<sup>851</sup> The next phase of the antislavery struggle shifted ground to engage with these very questions and concerns. Before moving on to how this next phase unfolded within international machinery and led to the evolution of slavery related international law and the terminology of contemporary forms of slavery in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is noteworthy to highlight two additional observations made by Quirk and underline how they relate back to the theoretical framework adopted here.

First, the impact of these developments did not limit themselves to ex-slaves; on the basis of various defining characteristics such as race, class, caste, gender, ethnicity, etc., other groups were now subject to being involved in practices that transformed, expanded and took on added significance as a result of the legal abolition of slavery. More concretely, instruments and practices (such as force and indentured labour, debt bondage, servile marriage, taxation in the form of labour, draconian labour contracts, forced re-contracting,

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<sup>851</sup> Ibid., p. 136 and ———, “The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.”, p. 566.

restrictions on movement and land ownership and penal sanctions for vagrancy and breach of contract) designed to constrain the ability of former slaves to assert their freedom and autonomy could be (and were) extended to other groups. This led to the merging of ex-slaves with other socioeconomic groupings creating new occupational categories and collective identities.<sup>852</sup> Consequently and ironically, as the door was closed on the ability to legally own and (ab)use human property as masters saw fit, the transformations engendered by that occurrence led to the expansion of the pool of people that could now be subjected to practices that could potentially approximate the conditions of ex-slaves within slavery.

Second, the brief peek at indentured labour also highlights the problematic issues surrounding deception and 'free choice' and its links to notions of what justifiably constitutes slavery; a factor which, along with the lack of viable livelihood alternatives, is an ever-present and enduring theme in the condition of people that get trapped in contemporary forms of slavery. This is clearly apparent in the cases of human trafficking and contract slavery. As Quirk has affirmed for the trafficking case (and which could easily be extended to contract slavery), "Unlike slave trading, many of the people involved migrate voluntarily, albeit on the basis of imperfect or fraudulent information. This raises the difficult issue of consent, and the extent to which the unsavoury outcomes can be linked to individual choices. In cases of severe abuse, consent should be inconsequential, but this is not how it works in practice."<sup>853</sup> Poverty is obviously a major catalyst in the push and pull factors that lead many to migrate voluntarily and thereafter get trapped in bondage. The difference between these individuals and others engaged in exploitative forms of labour is that those trapped in contemporary forms of slavery (or their families) risk severe punishments if they try to leave. Usually, their exploiters expend a great deal of energy to track them down if they do manage to escape.

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<sup>852</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., pp. 129 and 136.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid., pp. 133, 217, 224 and 237.

With this select review of how legal abolition impacted some extant practice templates to mutate and initiate debates about differences and similarities between these transformed and expanded practices and slavery complete, the next section will turn to the question of how, as a consequence of these developments, slavery related international law evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – and culminated in the designation of certain practices as contemporary forms of slavery.

### Antislavery Internationalization and International Law

#### 1919 Saint-Germain-en-Laye

After the Great War, the slavery question had receded from the international agenda and was no longer a serious preoccupation for colonial powers. There was a generally accepted misconception that slavery was now a relic. In this atmosphere, while meeting to negotiate peace treaties, the victors of the war abrogated the 1890 Brussels Pact and replaced it with three new treaties signed in Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1919.<sup>854</sup> One of the treaties contained a single clause binding signatories to “secure the complete suppression of slavery in all its forms” while the new League of Nations covenant bound its members to “secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labour.”<sup>855</sup>

The treaty did not define slavery nor did it enumerate what the various forms it made reference to consisted of. The necessity of addressing pressing matters flowing from the termination of the Great War, coupled with the relatively generalized (and erroneous) belief that slavery was a thing of the past, led to the rudimentary nature of the slavery portions of

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<sup>854</sup> Miers, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 202.

<sup>855</sup> 1919 was also the year that the ILO was established to define and negotiate conventions regarding minimal labour standards. ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 62.

the Saint-Germain-en-Laye covenants.<sup>856</sup> Although terms remained undefined and no effective monitoring and/or enforcement mechanisms were put into place, the 1919 St-Germain-en-Laye treaties were significant because it was the first time that a multilateral international treaty codified the notion that slavery can be manifest in different forms. This was a consequence of the debates that were initiated and tried to address questions about the similarities and differences between transformed and expanded practices brought on by the legal abolition of slavery. Within the larger trajectory of the redefinition of slavery in international law, the appearance in an international treaty of the terminology of ‘slavery in all its forms’ created the conceptual foundation upon which later landmark slavery conventions were structured. We now turn to one of these significant covenants.

#### The League of Nations 1926 Slavery Convention

Developments brewing since the 1919 Saint-Germain-en-Laye treaty led to a renewed interest in the slave trade and slavery. One example that was brought to light by the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines’ Protection Society (BFASS’ successor<sup>857</sup>) was the slave trading that was taking place in southwest Ethiopia and British East Africa. Another was the flourishing export trade going across the Red Sea.<sup>858</sup> In 1924, as a result of John Harris’ (the Anti-Slavery Society’s secretary) dogged lobbying, the League of Nations requested that all its members report on slavery within their territories. The initiative led to the creation of a Temporary Slavery Commission (TSC) set up to inquire about the state of slavery (in all its forms) in the world. As the experts’ commission began work in 1924, its main difficulty was

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<sup>856</sup> Governments’ complicity facilitated these misconceptions. Not only was a questioning initiated regarding the similarity of some altered and expanded practices but, at this historical juncture, ‘classical’ slavery was far from being a thing of the past. Slave trading and the legal institution of slavery persisted in certain world quarters (Africa and the Middle East) well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>857</sup> In an evolution and reflection of the native welfare concern put on the international agenda in Berlin (1884-85) and Brussels (1889-90) and ensuing mutations of post-abolition labour and servitude practices, in 1909 BFASS merged with the Aborigines’ Protection Society. Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>858</sup> ———, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", pp. 202-204 and ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 16 and 66.



coming up with a universally acceptable definition of slavery. As a result of the challenges associated with this daunting task, the commission decided to opt for a different approach. Instead of a definition, it produced a list of forms of bondage that it felt warranted inquiry and investigation. The list included classical slavery, debt bondage, serfdom and forced labour.<sup>859</sup> In essence, with slavery legally abolished and chattel slavery serving as its reference point, the commission took on the task of trying to establish what justifiably constituted slavery.

After cautiously overcoming various setbacks, the temporary slavery commission's work set the ground for the 1926 League of Nations Slavery Convention. The convention included a definition of slavery. Slavery was defined as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised." The treaty bound its signatories to "prevent and suppress the slave trade" and "To bring about, progressively and as soon as possible, the complete abolition of slavery in all its forms."<sup>860</sup> Although it did not succeed in specifying the nature of these forms, the addendum of the words "in all its forms" left the door open to include and eventually attack practices that could/would be considered "analogous to slavery."<sup>861</sup> In the process of inquiring into the various methods used for transferring and acquiring slaves, the TSC delved into marriage practices. This eventually led to contributing to the elaboration of the concept of servile marriage. It also ventured into how certain child adoption procedures masked slave

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<sup>859</sup> Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo.", pp. 87-89, Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 100-116 and ———, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 206.

<sup>860</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 123 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 145.

<sup>861</sup> Miers, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", p. 207.

dealing.<sup>862</sup> While the 1926 Slavery Convention was a landmark instantiation of a struggle which had begun a century and a half earlier, it had its wrinkles.

Even though the TSC had identified forced labour as one of the forms of bondage that required inquiry and attention, during negotiations, references to forced labour were watered down. At the time, forced labour was arguably the harshest and cruellest form of bondage that was most reminiscent of slavery. Colonial powers contrived to frame antislavery in a way that would not interfere with practices sanctioned and utilized in their colonies.<sup>863</sup> By specifying that forced labour was justifiable in exceptional circumstances and for public purposes only, the convention indirectly legitimized the practice.<sup>864</sup> Another issue was the fact that in its definition of slavery, the convention did not specify what “any or all” meant when it came to “powers attaching to the right of ownership.” This gave signatories leeway to interpret which practices qualified as having “powers attaching to the right of ownership.”<sup>865</sup> The game of justifying the use of certain practices on the basis of debates about the similarities and differences between these practices and slavery shifted ground to more specific and technical talking points regarding the “powers attaching to the right of ownership.”

This ground shifting in the debate is reflected in the challenges faced by an ensuing series of (expert) League committees tasked (in the 1930s) with examining the state of slavery in the world. Governments repeatedly responded to information requests by affirming that slavery was nonexistent in their territories. When pressed about reporting on a range of practices that exhibited conditions approximating slavery, more often than not, the standard

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<sup>862</sup> ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*., p. 111. Legal abolition and the delegitimization of slavery led to the scrutinization of several of these types of practices. Mui tsai in China and wardship in Sierra Leone are two examples. pp. 157-161 and 283-286.

<sup>863</sup> For a brief review of the British contribution to this phenomenon, see *Ibid.*, pp. 126-128.

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121-130 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 144.

<sup>865</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking*., p. 145 and ———, “The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.”, p. 568.

government response was to differentiate these practices from what they referred to as ‘true’ slavery.<sup>866</sup> These ‘other’ practices, which were transformed and expanded by the legal abolition of slavery, were represented as serfdom and domestic or voluntary slavery. The familiar argument that individuals who engaged in these activities were free to leave but voluntarily stayed because of antecedent attachments and favourable treatment recurred.<sup>867</sup> The repeated denials of the existence of slavery and the artificial distinctions manufactured between ‘true’ and ‘benign’ forms of servitude allowed officials to skirt antislavery obligations. These denials and machinations also permitted the pushing of reconfigured practices that exhibited conditions that were similar to slavery to lurk in the shadows. In this cognitive environment, it therefore became easy to represent cases where evidence was provided for the existence of practices and conditions which were analogous to slavery as vestiges, anomalies and/or exceptions rather than substantive and generalized problems that needed addressing. Discontinuity positions treating the legal abolition of slavery as an “historical endpoint”<sup>868</sup> are fuelled by these types of representations.

The absence from the international antislavery agenda of the plight of millions engaged in practices like peonage and debt bondage in Latin America and the Indian subcontinent reflects this contemporaneous reality.<sup>869</sup> The 1924 TSC’s favoured and more liberal approach regarding the larger grouping of servitude forms was therefore stifled. Although the question of other forms of bondage was successfully introduced to and integrated in the international antislavery agenda,<sup>870</sup> efforts to distinguish between slavery and those forms of bondage (forced labour, serfdom, debt bondage, marriage practices,

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<sup>866</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 102-103 and 168.

<sup>867</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 147 and Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 207. See the discussion of the concept of choice in post-abolition settings covered in the Indentured Labour subsection of this chapter.

<sup>868</sup> In Quirk’s terminology.

<sup>869</sup> Forced and indentured labour issues in Portuguese Africa, the Congo Free State, Liberia and the Soviet Union are a few examples.

<sup>870</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 74 and Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo." p. 89.

pawnship, child exploitation, etc.) prevailed. In addition, due to political considerations, the matter of forced labour was sidestepped.<sup>871</sup> The centrality and dominant imagery of ‘classical’ slavery therefore endured and overshadowed other forms of servitude – forms that had taken on added significance in post-abolition settings. Consequently, the antislavery agenda fell back on continuing its primary objective of eradicating the reduced yet still present pockets of legalized slavery in Africa and the Middle East.

When slavery was finally legally abolished in most of the Arabian Peninsula in the 1950s,<sup>872</sup> the opening created by the 1926 convention meant that there was an existing precedent upon which antislavery forces could return to examining other forms of servitude from a fresher and more expansive perspective. These refreshed perspectives were reflected in another significant treaty marking the progression towards the eventual designation of certain practices as contemporary forms of slavery in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. The next section will therefore move to examining the treaty in question (the UN’s 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery).

#### The UN’s 1956 Supplementary Convention

As its name indicates, the 1956 convention was meant to supplement the League’s 1926 convention – which the UN had appropriated. Just as antislavery was not a significant issue on the post WWI international agenda, it was also not a very salient issue for the powers that be in the immediate aftermath of WWII. However, spurred on by the growing body of evidence highlighting practices like forced labour, military ‘comfort’ women and concentration camps during WWII, slavery remained a salient issue to activists. Eerily similar

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<sup>871</sup> With the creation in 1919 of the ILO and its ensuing work, forced labour was eventually considered the providence of the ILO.

<sup>872</sup> In some places it took until the early 70s to achieve this objective. See Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, chapter 20.

to what transpired in 1924 and led to League's 1926 Slavery Convention, it was now Charles Greenidge's (the then secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society) turn to do what one of his predecessors before him had done. Like John Harris, Greenidge's dogged lobbying led, in 1950, to the creation of a UN committee on slavery (the Ad Hoc Committee on Slavery).<sup>873</sup> The committee's work put antislavery back on the international agenda and eventually culminated in the elaboration of a significant international slavery convention.<sup>874</sup> The 1956 Supplementary Convention was a highly important marker in the progression of the antislavery struggle and the eventual designation of certain practices as contemporary forms of slavery. In the muddled waters of determining what constituted slavery or not, it was the advent of this covenant that started the process of tipping the scales in favour of adopting the more expansive approach advocated by the 1924 League TSC (and ensuing League commissions and committees). Article one of the convention stipulates that parties

...take all practicable and necessary legislative and other measures to bring about progressively and as soon as possible the complete abolition of the following institutions and practices, where they still exist, and whether or not they are covered by the definition of slavery contained in article 1 of the Slavery Convention signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926.<sup>875</sup>

The practices that were clearly identified were debt bondage, serfdom, servile marriage and the transfer of persons under eighteen for the purpose of exploiting their labour.<sup>876</sup>

The inclusion of these forms of bondage is characterized by Quirk as a move from approaches emphasizing "strict equivalence" to those privileging "sufficient similarity".<sup>877</sup> In

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<sup>873</sup> Ibid., pp. 317-319 and 323-326, ———, "The Anti-Slavery Game: Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in Africa and Arabia, 1890-1975.", pp. 209-210 and Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo.", p. 93.

<sup>874</sup> This was helped by the fact that western powers had a renewed interest in slavery; in the midst of the early phases of the Cold War, the western bloc wanted to expose and equate Soviet labour camps to slavery. Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 320-321 and Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", p. 252.

<sup>875</sup> UN, "Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery."

<sup>876</sup> Ibid.

other words, even if these other forms of servitude were not identical to slavery, the familial resemblance they bore was sufficient to justify their placement on the same legal and ethical footing. This reformulation was far from simply being semantic. As opposed to being the reference point that sits above and in relation to which other forms of bondage were viewed, differentiated and defined, the move started relegating chattel slavery into a larger category which eventually placed it on an equal footing with various other forms of servitude. More concretely, classical slavery was now on the road to becoming one among many forms of bondage that warranted attention as a result of prevailing antislavery commitments. This development effectively began reversing the tide of the central and dominant imagery of chattel slavery overshadowing other forms of servitude that had taken on added significance in the wake of abolition. Consequently, these developments also made it relatively more difficult for those with stakes in perpetuating various forms of bondage and skirting antislavery commitments to differentiate these practices from what they routinely categorized as 'true' or 'real' slavery.<sup>878</sup>

After decades long vacillations, deliberations and debates,<sup>879</sup> another of the UN's 1950 Ad Hoc Committee's proposals finally came to fruition. The committee had suggested the establishment of a permanent UN slavery committee. Given that neither the 1926 convention nor the 1956 supplement had built-in monitoring capacities, activists appropriated this suggestion as a way to create permanent mechanisms to alleviate these monitoring/enforcement gaps. Finally, in 1975, the UN established its Working Group on Slavery.<sup>880</sup> We now briefly turn to the labours of this working group to examine how it

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<sup>877</sup> Quirk, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.", pp. 569-570 and ———, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>878</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 331.

<sup>879</sup> For an in-depth coverage of this episode, see Ibid., chapters 21 and 22.

<sup>880</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 152.

continued the process of adopting a broader and more expansive outlook in (re)defining slavery.

### The UN Working Group on Slavery

If the 1956 Supplementary Convention pried a space open to start the process of modifying the criteria – from notions of “strict equivalence” to “sufficient similarity” – to determine what could justifiably be considered slavery, the Working Group expanded it further. This conscious and more flexible approach was based on the belief that existing covenants did not capture all of slavery’s contemporary aspects and manifestations.<sup>881</sup> In familiar fashion however, although there was consensus on the need for a broader definition of slavery, none was successfully elaborated and accepted. Wide notions of slavery ranging from conditions “leading to the exploitation of their (individuals’) labour” to practices that end up restricting individual freedom and lead to “severe hardship and serious deprivations of liberty” were advanced.<sup>882</sup> This open-ended approach is reflected in the range of issues that the Working Group covered between 1975 and 2006; from more established concerns such as debt-bondage, servile marriage, forced labour, the exploitation of sex and children and human trafficking, the group also covered practices tangentially related to slavery like female genital mutilation, honour killings and the illicit sale of organs.<sup>883</sup> For Miers (and Quirk), the seemingly incessant and excessive extension of the definition of slavery to cover various disparate practices represents a risk. The argument is that stretching the notion of slavery to this extent stands to transform it into a concept that could serve to characterize virtually any type of exploitation and mistreatment. The move could effectively evacuate specificity and consequently reduce the notion of slavery to a rhetorical and hollow device upon which it

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<sup>881</sup> (UN), “Report of the Working Group on Slavery on Its First Session.”, p. 4.

<sup>882</sup> Ibid.

<sup>883</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 415-417 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 154.

would be difficult to base effective policy.<sup>884</sup> Closing this parenthesis to return to the UN's Working Group on Slavery, to the dismay of activists, the group was not bestowed with any significant enforcement powers. Until it was superseded by the introduction of a UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of slavery in 2007, its main role was to vet and disseminate information gathered by accredited NGOs.<sup>885</sup>

As for the trajectory leading to the qualifiers of contemporary to characterize 20<sup>th</sup> c. bondage practices, the usage of the term started making its appearance in the jargon in the late 1980s. In 1988, the Working Group was renamed the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. The renaming was meant to make the group "more descriptive of its actual interests, namely exploitation of sex, debt-bondage, sale of children, apartheid."<sup>886</sup> As the latter sentence indicates, the change was meant to denote a focus on the main concerns of the day. It was not meant to imply that those contemporaneous worries amounted to novel (and therefore different) species of slavery. The conceptualization of modern forms of bondage as novel species of slavery originated in ensuing analyses that attributed the advent of these practices to what they characterized as relatively recent phenomena like globalization, technological innovation, the end of the Cold War, demographic shifts, etc. The work of Kevin Bales best exemplifies this type of analysis.

With his now seminal text<sup>887</sup>, Bales, a prominent antislavery activist and scholar, has undeniably and commendably contributed to documenting, exposing and raising the profile of slavery in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In the process however, he has managed to capture the imaginary of many by distinguishing between 'new' and 'old' slavery on the basis of six focal

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<sup>884</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. xiii, Quirk, "The Anti-Slavery Project: Linking the Historical and Contemporary.", p. 578 and 594, and ———, "Modern Slavery.", p. 335.

<sup>885</sup> Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, pp. 385-386 and chapter 23, and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, pp. 154-155.

<sup>886</sup> (UN), "Report of the Working Group on Slavery on Its Twelfth Session.", p. 26.

<sup>887</sup> Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy.* (first published in 1999)



characteristics: ownership, purchase costs, profit margins, availability, relationships, maintenance and ethnic difference. Bales characterizes old slavery as an institution in which slaves were legally owned, in short supply and therefore expensive to purchase. Given that profit margins from slave labour were relatively lower then, this led masters to establishing long-term relationships in which they had a clear stake in the upkeep of their human chattel – who remained their slaves in perpetuity. Finally, old slavery was also based on ethnic differentiation. In contrast, Bales claims that in contemporary forms, supply is abundant, purchase costs are low and profit margins relatively higher. Consequently, there are no incentives to maintain (and establish relationships with) and own slaves. And, in this modern situation, ethnic cleavages are unimportant. Bales attributes the differences between old and new slavery to two main 20<sup>th</sup> c. phenomena which, according to him, make contemporary slaves “disposable”; the phenomena he refers to are a boom in population and rapid economic and social change (i.e., globalization).<sup>888</sup> There are a number of points upon which Bales’ reading can be challenged.

The root of the problem with Bales’ framework and analysis lies in the fact that, not unlike many other slavery studies, Bales uses transatlantic slavery (mainly slavery in the US) as a reference point upon which he bases and extends extrapolations about the history of slavery as a whole. His observations can be challenged on two main fronts; first, on the accuracy of his characterizations as they relate to the historical case of transatlantic chattel slavery, and second, on the inadequacy of using that particular historical case to extrapolate about the whole of the history of slavery and the differing trajectories that led to abolition in non-transatlantic settings. On the first front, during the period covering transatlantic slavery, variations have been recorded in terms of both the available supply and price of slaves. This

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<sup>888</sup> See Ibid., ———, “Understanding Global Slavery : A Reader.”, ———, *New Slavery : A Reference Handbook.*, Bales and Cornell, *Slavery Today.* and Bales, Trodd, and Williamson, *Modern Slavery : The Secret World of 27 Million People.*

fact therefore impinges on Bales' logical corollaries regarding the need to maintain one's slaves by establishing longer-term relationships with them. Quite to the contrary, in many instances and places, the abundance and relative inexpensiveness and availability of potential replacement slaves meant that planters could readily afford to work slaves to death, which they very often did. This reality made the plantation model of slavery (based on gang labour) present in the Americas (and elsewhere) particularly harsh and cruel. Additionally, the claim that profit margins were relatively lower in old slavery also stands to be challenged. Many slavers and plantation owners and operators (not to mention cities like Liverpool, Bristol, Nantes, and entire countries like Portugal, Spain, France, the US and GB, among others) enriched themselves considerably from the slave trade and its derivatives (namely sugar, tobacco, coffee and cocoa production). These facts are well expounded in the established body of scholarly work that has argued that, at the specific moments that the slave trade and slavery were outlawed in many transatlantic countries, generally, slave systems still had room to expand and had not yet peaked in terms of productivity and efficiency (i.e., profitability).<sup>889</sup>

On the second note dealing with the inadequacy of the extrapolation of Bales' observations to other geographical quarters, many issues can be identified. First, as illustrated in chapters two and five of this thesis, historically, slavery in non-European transatlantic settings came in variegated forms. Within these differing manifestations of bondage, slaves enjoyed a varying gradation of traditional and prescribed rights (sometimes upheld in law) which could lead to a considerable range of attendant conditions in their quality of life. Second, in many of these same settings, bondage practices rested on very divergent social and economic realities in which enslaved and enslavers were of the same ilk (in stark contrast to

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<sup>889</sup> See Anstey, "Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique.", ———, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition: 1760-1810.*, Davis, "Capitalism, Abolition and Hegemony.", Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition.*, ———, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective.*, ———, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labour Vs. Slavery in British Emancipation*, and Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.*

slavery in the Americas).<sup>890</sup> Often, slavery in the east had non-monetary dimensions rooted in larger patterns of social hierarchy and/or dependency.<sup>891</sup> For example, in the IOW, bondsmen could – with certain caveats – conceivably move up and down the hierarchy of differing forms of slavery or could even migrate from the legal status of slave to freeman and back.<sup>892</sup> Many of these historical realities stand squarely opposed to and are difficult to reconcile with Bales' characterizations of old slavery. As a result of this uneasy transposition, the distinctions that Bales uses to generalize and differentiate between 'older' and 'newer' forms of slavery become tenuous.

In addition to these problems, some of the contemporary forms of slavery that Bales characterizes as 'new' existed alongside 'old' slavery for centuries (like debt bondage) or had antecedent variants (like the relationship and similarities between contemporary 'contract slavery' and indentured migration schemes). It would of course be erroneous to affirm that recent phenomena like globalization, technological innovation, the end of the Cold War and demographic shifts did not – or do not – contribute to the continuing development, expansion, mutation and perpetuation of contemporary forms of bondage. For example, in the immediate post-Soviet era, the attention garnered by the expansion of illegal migration and the trafficking of women and girls from the former eastern European bloc for the purposes of sexual exploitation elevated the interest in (and profile of) all contemporary forms of bondage. It is at this historical intersection that these practices effectively went from being

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<sup>890</sup> Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.", p. 57, Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 94 and Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 199.

<sup>891</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 196. This reality was conveniently used by various authorities and detractors of antislavery to justify and rationalize these practices as a step up from the chattel variant of slavery. Apologists often characterized these practices as "benign" forms of servitude. Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, pp. 95-96 and Quirk, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.", p. 546.

<sup>892</sup> Campbell, "Slavery in the Indian Ocean World.", pp. 59-61 and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, p. 96. Miers has also made the same type of distinction for the African case. See Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade.*, chapter 3 and ———, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem.*, p. 32. However, slaves were still considered the legal property of their owners. Strict obedience was demanded and ensured by the ever present threat and/or use of violence, and sexual abuse and harsh treatment were common. Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, pp. 195-196. and Temperley, *British Antislavery: 1833-1870.*, pp. 87 and 97-98.

marginal worries to becoming mainstream concerns. And, it is within this renewed interest that slavery research (and policy) proliferated and notions differentiating contemporary forms from past incarnations took hold. Or, as highlighted earlier, the themes of poverty, inequality and precariousness, which are common denominators in all manifestations of bondage, are also symptoms of the darker aspects of modern day globalized capitalist economies; as long as they are not effectively mitigated and they place individuals at a relative disadvantage when it comes to bargaining their terms of service, involuntary labour practices will be perceived as having a comparative advantage and exploitation and bondage will persist.

The danger in accepting these binary truncations results in the ill-advised notion that ‘old’ and ‘new’ slavery are a different species. Therefore, the attending and logical conclusion is that they can be separated, and the study of one does not require any in depth examination of the other. By adopting a practice based approach, through a brief examination of debt bondage, forced and indentured labour and servile marriage, the current (and previous chapter) of this thesis has tried to illustrate the very opposite. Namely, as reflected in the tracking of the process of the redefinition of slavery within international machinery as of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, as a result of legal abolition, the quest for suitable replacements for slaves expanded and/or transformed the use of certain practices based on pre-existing historical practice templates. In other words, the successes and limitations of the legal abolition of slavery led to the expansion and/or transformation of practices which conditioned ensuing thought patterns and led, on the basis of the evocation of the similarities of some of these expanded and/or altered practices with slavery, to ensuing rationalizations and debates regarding their legitimacy and use. Endorsing the dichotomy of old and new slavery therefore leads to incomplete analyses about the origins – and potential solutions to – contemporary forms of bondage. More concretely, the dichotomy might conceal the fact that contemporary forms of bondage not only stem from the limits of legal abolition, but are based on the latest

mutations and manifestations of some enduring historical themes; namely, poverty and “ideologies of human difference and social discrimination”.<sup>893</sup>

The time has now come to conclude with a fuller examination of the implications of the observations that were made throughout the body of this work. The conclusion will now move to recapping how a practice inspired theoretical foil was elaborated and used to harness and bridge diverging positions within the slavery literature. In turn, this will be linked to the overarching objective of illustrating the promise of such approaches in potentially enhancing our comprehension of larger issues of stability and change in global politics – and consequently, the potential promise and implications of extending such approaches to examining and addressing various other global issues.

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<sup>893</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 250.

## **Conclusion**

Before proceeding to probing some of the implications of this study, it would be useful to begin the conclusion with a recap of the general framework of the overarching arguments and structure of the thesis. In its simplest expression, the thesis has argued that practices (or a practice approach) can be used to explain both change and stability. On the change side of things, practices shape dispositions which condition reflection and deliberation. When these reflections and deliberations run up against other (and others') dispositionally informed practices, the clashes can lead to a dialectic of contestation which can result in the renegotiation of the legitimacy of particular practices. Conversely, on the stability side of things, in response to this dialectic, practices – especially well entrenched ones – usually exhibit a robust resistance to change and tend to condition evolving thought patterns. Practices therefore have a tendency to mutate rather than come to a definitive end; this denotes a measure of continuity rather than a sharp and clearly discernible break with antecedent practices (or the past).

The thesis begins with a central focus on the practice of slavery as a point of departure. Chapter One served to elaborate the thesis' practice focused theoretical framework. By outlining the ubiquity of slavery across time and space and reviewing select rationalizations justifying and perpetuating its practice, Chapter Two established that entrenched collective meanings about slavery resting in peoples' background knowledges were so deeply-rooted that they came to be forgotten as such – and subconsciously regulated evolving thought patterns perpetuating bondage. The legitimacy of the practice therefore acquired a normal taken-for-granted feel. This normalization served as the basis of the somewhat thoughtless and routinized perpetuation and maintenance of slavery. Not only did a concerted struggle to counter slavery not manifest itself until the late eighteenth century; in addition, throughout two millennia, the rare and isolated murmurings occasionally

questioning the practice were easily assuaged. As Chapter Two has illustrated, even when potential opportunities to challenge slavery presented themselves, the entrenched nature of the practice facilitated its incorporation and accommodation within evolving and fundamentally differing thought frameworks (attesting to the thought conditioning properties and capacities of entrenched practices). The review of select rationalizations in Chapter Two also served to establish the social context and parameters that antislavery would face.

Just as the iterative nature of the practice focused processes outlined above conditioned thought patterns to dispose a large majority of people not to give slavery's legitimacy an afterthought, religious practices conditioned the dispositions of non-conformist (Quaker and Evangelical) groups to reflect and deliberate about – and question – slavery's justifiability. By reviewing some of these practices and beliefs, Chapter Three highlighted how the transposition into the political arena of arguments based on these shaping practices clashed with the long-held and deeply entrenched beliefs underpinning slavery's normalization and perpetuation. By examining the ensuing dialectic of contestation and its attending political dynamics, Chapter Three illustrated how the renegotiation of the legitimacy of the practice of slave trading and slavery were set afoot and culminated in the 1807 British slave trade ban. In Adler and Pouliot's words, through the Quaker-Evangelical challenge, the deeply-ingrained forgotten-as-such collective meanings contained in background knowledges supporting the practice of slavery were "reflexively recovered"<sup>894</sup> and challenged. This adds substance to the claim that a clash of practices was at the origin of the transformation of a millennia long enduring practice (and that practices are progenitors of change). It also adds substance to the claim that the enactment of practices in and on the

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<sup>894</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 18 and Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities.", p. 271.



world can alter physical surroundings as well as individual and/or collective ideas about the world.<sup>895</sup>

The successful dissemination and take-up of antislavery practices described in Chapter Three altered the social context and parameters of action within Britain. Chapter Four illustrated how continuing vigilance and contestation within this transformed social context contributed to the British political establishment's appropriation of the reformed slavery related understandings emanating from the domestic slave trade ban campaign. Once appropriated, the reformed understandings led, at the international level, to a dialectic of contestation analogous to the domestic one. Chapter Four concluded with an examination of how Britain presided – at times zealously – over the process of projecting the antislavery struggle into the international arena. This contestation process initially focused on European nations and eventually contributed to the successful delegitimization of the practice of slavery within the European and transatlantic European realms. Chapters two through four demonstrated how, within a proviso to avoid exaggerated overextensions, discontinuity positions are justified in invoking a historical disjuncture to characterize these changes.

After slavery was legally abolished in the European and transatlantic European realms, the internationalization process continued its expansion into Africa and the east. As Chapter Five outlined, this expansion unfolded through – and was conditioned by – the expansion of European international society. Rooted in their specific experiences with transatlantic slavery (and the transatlantic antislavery struggle), led by the British, European powers attempted to transpose (or imposed, often clumsily) their antislavery commitments and practices to Africa and the east. However, audiences in these geographical areas lacked group membership delineators possessed by Europeans on the basis of which the competence of antislavery practices could be evaluated. Stated differently, mutual intelligibility and

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<sup>895</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 7.

susceptibility in identifying and sustaining shared antislavery practices was weak or non-existent at best. Audiences in Africa and the east did not share the extensive European network of beliefs and associations of slavery which derived from the bible, the works of classical antiquity and specific European experiences with slavery. Another important factor that made the non-European phases of the antislavery struggle qualitatively different from previous phases is the fact that the dialectics of contestation regarding the legitimacy of slavery, which were spurred on by clashing practice catalyzed by the expansion of antislavery practices to Africa and the east were complicated by the existence of numerous stakeholders partaking in multiple divergent (and potentially clashing) practices.

Chapter Five identified a tripartite division of clashing practices to substantiate those affirmations. The first, covered in the previous paragraph, involved audience issues regarding the practice of variegated forms of bondage still considered legitimate by native populations and leaders. The second and third were the practices of colonization and antislavery. The creative gymnastics involved in trying to reconcile these often divergent practices led to a gradual abolition of slavery and an ensuing and complex attendant (re)negotiation of the legitimacy of practices that would justifiably constitute – or not – slavery. This process (spurred on by the quest for suitable replacements for slaves) led to the expansion and/or mutation of extant bondage practices which eventually evolved into what we now commonly refer to as contemporary forms of slavery. To illustrate these points, Chapter Five examined the way slavery was abolished in India and how this led to the expansion and/or mutation of debt bondage (still prevalent on the subcontinent and considered the most expansive form of contemporary slavery). Chapter Six continued this thread of examination by providing brief outlines of similar evolutions in relation to select bondage practices (forced and indentured labour and servile marriage) that took on added significance in post-abolition settings in Africa and the East; many of these problems persist to this day or are still manifest in

transfigured forms. In addition, Chapter Six also examined how these evolving dynamics played themselves out in international machinery and culminated in the redefinition of slavery in international law to eventually encompass and address a variety of forms of ('contemporary') bondage. At the theoretical level, the material covered in chapters five and six display how well entrenched practices' capacity to exhibit a robust resistance to change conditioned evolving thought patterns and engendered mutations to ensure some form of continuity – explaining the stability (continuity) part of the equation of the thesis.

### Implications

Each ensuing phase (or round) of the historical processes alluded to in this thesis evidence discreet evolutions that have culminated in the characterization of certain present-day practices as contemporary forms of slavery. Adopting and applying the specific practice theory inspired approach elaborated in this study highlights this fact and thus helps denaturalize the discontinuity treatment of slavery as an historical artefact. This helps reorient our views away from the ostensible differences and/or novelty of contemporary bondage practices, to focusing on some of the characteristics and underlying causes that these practices have in common with antecedent incarnations – corroborating and linking to continuity representations. This substantiates Adler and Pouliot's arguments that "studying international practices from a historical perspective" and looking back "to the generative relationships that made them possible, as well as the socio-political processes that allowed their diffusion", enable conceptualizing practices as "sets of activities that connect with past social and political struggles over the meaning and ruling of the world." Consequently, the practice framework adopted in this study strengthens the notion that "historicizing

practice...allows for path dependence and other historical effects on current international practice.”<sup>896</sup>

The practice oriented theoretical framework developed here adds specificity and clarity in apprehending and understanding some of the complex historical processes and effects reviewed in this thesis. A focus on tracking practices through time forces to us explore, integrate and account for multiple contextual factors that inevitably intercede in (and influence) these processes. Within the theoretical framework elaborated and applied here, this is manifest and operates through the notion that clashing practices not only lead to revealing dialectics which result in the renegotiation of the legitimacy of certain activities; in assessing the scope of stability and/or change, they also force us to analyze and reveal the contextual factors that constrain and shape how these dialectics play themselves out and are eventually reconciled. For example, the audience issues highlighted by tracking the externalization of antislavery practices to Africa and the east revealed fundamentally important (practice conditioned) constraints and impacts that differing practices and conceptualizations of elements like resources, liberty, freedom, money, social hierarchy and dependency had on underpinning the continuing legitimacy of various forms of bondage in Africa and the east – and how these differed and clashed with European conceptualizations. Or, when compared to the European phase of the internationalization struggle, how tensions between British (and general European) antislavery internationalization and colonization practices during the scramble for Africa revealed Britain’s relative decline in relation to its European counterparts – and the qualitatively different shape that this phase of the internationalization struggle took. In the end, the forms that the reconciliation of these clashing practices and tensions took played a determinative role in the expansion and/or mutation and evolution of bondage practices that we now call contemporary forms of slavery.

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<sup>896</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

Flowing from the points highlighted in the two previous paragraphs, the practice theoretical framework adopted and applied here also illustrates how we can break ground in deconstructing and bridging the dichotomization of stability and change which afflicts and divides the continuity and discontinuity representations outlined in this thesis. In more practical terms, the breaking down and bridging of the discontinuity-continuity divide facilitates reframing issues to recognize the fact that contemporary forms of slavery are reconfigurations of enduring historical themes like poverty and exploitation and that “anti-slavery does not exist as an isolated issue, but instead becomes part of larger challenges such as racism and discrimination, poverty and inequality, human rights and development, migration and citizenship, and ethical trading and corporate responsibility.”<sup>897</sup> A theoretical framework which affords the ability to track the genesis and evolution of specific practices in a given issue area and links and explains relationships between antecedent and current practices facilitates and enhances our capacity to more effectively diagnose the source and evolution of persistent challenges. This inherently makes it easier to devise more efficient prescriptions to address ongoing problems.

On a related tangent, the framework adopted here also adds grist to the notions that “...most forms of contemporary slavery are not new. The main thing that is new is the way in which they have come to be conceptualized.”<sup>898</sup> In essence, current understandings of slavery are a result of a complex mix of multiple rounds of post abolition on-the-ground evolutions and how they conditioned thought frameworks and were thereby interpreted and represented. For example, analyses like Bales’ build on the preliminary rupture begun by early studies which prematurely proclaimed the death of slavery on the basis of the significant achievement of legal abolition and its eventual global dissemination. Treating modern forms

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<sup>897</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 252, Welch, "Defining Contemporary Forms of Slavery: Updating a Venerable Ngo.", p. 77 and Kaye, "The Development of the Anti-Slavery Movement after 1807.", pp. 255-257.

<sup>898</sup> Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking.*, p. 162 and ———, "Ending Slavery in All Its Forms: Legal Abolition and Effective Emancipation in Historical Perspective.", p. 544.

of slavery as novel implicitly agrees with these narratives. On the other hand, analyses like Quirk's try to correct course by highlighting how the limitations of legal abolition contributed to the development and evolution of bondage practices that we currently call contemporary/modern forms of slavery. These reflections could obviously be extended to cover and qualify the sum total of the discursive aspects of the dialectic exchanges which eventually culminated in the contemporary or modern moniker to denote present-day forms of slavery.

On this matter of how we conceptualize and discuss slavery differently, we may be able to extend some of Williams' conclusions about the politics of security to the politics of antislavery. Namely, his conclusions about how power (in the form of specific articulatory practices) shapes the politics of security can be extended to the politics of antislavery. In fact, to elucidate this very point, we can almost seamlessly replace the word security by antislavery in the following passages from *Culture and Security*.

Opening up this legacy helps clear away some of the more pernicious and powerful barriers to a fuller theorization of practice in [antislavery] studies.

The recognition poses significant challenges for thinking about the relationship between analytic and political practices, and the relationship between scholarship and power in the construction of [antislavery] relations.<sup>899</sup>

Practice inspired theoretical frameworks like the one used in this thesis have the added value of revealing – and possibly averting – some of the potentially detrimental effects that articulatory practices can have on our understanding of specific issues under study. The effects of relegating a practice like slavery to the historical dustbin by overextending discontinuity positions are a prime example of such an occurrence; these types of occurrences

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<sup>899</sup> Williams, *Culture and Security: Symbolic Power and the Politics of International Security*., p. 9 and 7.

can taint our perceptions and negatively affect our ability to prescribe effective policies to address specific challenges.

At the most generic level, in providing a theoretical foil that can track discreet and incremental evolutions which can more effectively bridge and link past and contemporary phenomena, the practice inspired scheme used here stands to provide an interesting framework to better qualify and operationalize the sociological affirmation that things are always in a constant state of flux. This may contribute to refining how we conceptualize and understand larger notions of change and stability in IR.

The slavery case demonstrates the fertility of the practice theory inspired theoretical framework elaborated in this thesis. The source and strength of the main – and potentially larger – contribution of this study rests in the fact that the framework used here is transposable and adaptable to studying various phenomena in the global realm. In this sense, the thesis has accepted Adler and Pouliot's invitation to "approach world politics through the lens of its manifold practices"<sup>900</sup> and has tried to contribute to developing a research program that makes practices the point of departure for the study of the subject matter of IR. The theoretical framework outlined here has engaged with "agency and the social and natural environments, with both material and discursive factors, and with the simultaneous processes of stability and change."<sup>901</sup> It has demonstrated how one entrenched dichotomy – in the form of stability and change – can be bridged. By elaborating one specific practice inspired theoretical framework that can potentially be transposed to studying various phenomena, the thesis has endorsed and engaged the idea of trying to further the agenda of coming up with ways to making "interparadigmatic conversations possible."<sup>902</sup> By expanding outside the security realm and taking up Adler and Pouliot's *Evolution of Practices* suggested line of inquiry, the thesis has sought to contribute to and further the practice turn in IR.

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<sup>900</sup> Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices.", p. 1.

<sup>901</sup> Ibid.

<sup>902</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

The slavery case was successfully harnessed to illustrate the applicability of the theoretical framework. The next steps would be to extend the theoretical framework proffered here to other issue areas in order to tighten the framework to potentially engage in comparative analyses that may transcend the particularities of the slavery case and draw out larger and potentially fruitful findings and implications about stability and change in global politics; findings which may better equip us to more efficiently engage with our social world with a view to transforming it. In this sense, the potential of practices as a conceptual lynchpin for IR analyses warrants further research and investigation.



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